

ARITAKE-WILD

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations

"CEEC Social Partners' Participation in the European Social Dialogue:

..... what are the social partner's needs?"

PHASE TWO - FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS

Report of the Polish National Seminar

Polonia Palace Hotel, Warsaw
Poland

15th November 2005

Prepared by ARITAKE-WILD
November 2005

ARITAKE-WILD

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations:

“CEEC Social Partners’ Participation in European Social Dialogue:
..... what are the social partners needs?”

Phase two – Follow-up seminars

Polonia Palace Hotel, Warsaw
Poland
15th November 2005

Introduction

The fourth in a series of follow-up national seminars¹ designed to maximise the effectiveness of the participation of the new EU member states in European Social Dialogue was held in Poland on 15th November 2005. The objectives of the seminar were to:

- Review progress on the implementation of the action plans developed during phase one of the project;
- Identify and discuss any problems that had been encountered and propose ways to resolve them;
- Identify future “individual organisation” and “joint” priority actions for the Polish social partners.

The seminar was attended by representatives from Polish employers' organisations (KPP, PKPP and ZRP) and the Polish trade union umbrella organisation (NSZZ). Also in attendance were representatives from the European social partners UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC; and experts. The full attendance list for the seminar is attached as appendix one.

Methodology

The seminar methodology built upon that used during the eight “two-day” CEEC national seminars. The one-day meeting format was designed with the objective of assuring maximum participation of the Polish trade union and employer representatives. The contribution of the participants from the European social partner organisations and the experts was designed to promote focussed debate; to facilitate problem identification and resolution; and encourage action plan development. Detailed discussions were held in small working groups. Plenary feedback and review sessions involving all attendees

¹ The first five seminars belonged to a pilot project of 5 new Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia). The pilot project was then expanded to include Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.

were used to identify priorities and build consensus around actions. To further facilitate the generation and discussion of ideas and the development of future strategies, the seminar was conducted to the maximum extent possible in the Polish language.

The seminar opened with formal presentations from the Polish social partner organisations that summarised the actions they had taken to implement their “phase one” project actions. The seminar closed with the social partner organisations agreeing a revised series of “effectiveness improvement” actions to be implemented over the short to medium term. Between these sessions were working group discussions, plenary debate and a variety of formal and informal inputs from the European social partners

This report follows the format of the seminar agenda. It provides an overview report of each of the working sessions, and contains a schedule of agreed actions developed at the meeting. The detailed agenda for the meeting is included as appendix two but the working sessions making up the seminar can be summarised as follows:

Overview agenda		
Session one	Presentations by the national social partners	“Implementation of the phase one action plans.”
Session two	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future.”
Session three	Working group discussion and feedback	“Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities.”
Session four	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners.”
Session five	Concluding discussion	“Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues.”

Report of the meeting

Session one - "Implementation of the phase one action plans."

The phase one action plan of the Polish employers' organisations included three points for action as follows;

Polish employers' organisation "phase one" action plan

- Using the capability profile presented at the seminar, the employers' organisations will undertake an evaluation of existing skills available to their organisations and develop action plans to meet the identified needs.
- To develop teamwork initiatives to better combine language and technical expertise.
- Following the establishment of the process for national level social dialogue, the employers' organisations will develop practices to promote positive cooperation to maximise their effectiveness as an employer group both nationally and in their relationships with the European level social partners.

To date the Polish employers' organisations have undertaken the following initiatives to implement their action commitments:

- ◇ Progress has been made on developing common "Polish employer" positions on EU related issues;
- ◇ Participation in bipartite roundtable discussions with the Polish trade unions took place on the issue of telework;

The employers reported that difficulties had been experienced in reaching bipartite consensus on telework and in securing the enthusiastic engagement of large companies on EU social dialogue issues.

The phase one action plan of the Polish trade unions included two points for action as follows;

Polish trade union "phase one" action plan

- Using the capability profile presented at the seminar, the trade unions will undertake an evaluation of existing skills available to their organisations and develop action plans to meet the identified training needs. Particular attention will be paid to developing the skills of younger people by giving them technical experience through acting as observers.
- To improve internal coordination between trade unions, in particular where the unions concerned are not members of European level social partner organisations.

ARITAKE-WILD

To date the Polish trade unions have undertaken the following initiatives to implement their action commitments:

- ◇ Engagement in a bipartite dialogue on telework;
- ◇ Skills training – particularly, but not limited to, the area of language skills development;
- ◇ Improved communication, information dissemination and cooperation between the various affiliates of NSZZ;

In addition to the initiatives taken to support the action plan, the Polish trade unions reported that they have made significant progress in the area of sectoral social dialogue. It is hoped that this will provide a basis from which the national and EU level social dialogue can be further developed. They noted that they had experienced difficulties in building effective bipartite relationships in the context of the existing strong tripartite structures; and although progress has been made on language capabilities. This continues to be a considerable problem.

Session two - "The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future."

Valeria Ronzitti (CEEP) and Jeanne Schmitt (UNICE) made a formal presentation offering a brief outline of the history and evolution of European social dialogue; a description of the current social dialogue work programme; and an indication of probable future priorities. Their full presentation is included as appendix three.

*Session three – Working group discussions and feedback
"Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities."*

The national representatives were divided into three working groups: A "trade union group"; an "employers' organisation group" and a "joint group" of trade union and employers' organisation participants. Representatives from UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP joined the employers' organisation group; two representatives from the ETUC together with one expert joined the trade union group; and representatives from ETUC, CEEP and UNICE, together with one expert, joined the "joint group". A chairperson/rapporteur was selected by each group from amongst the national participants.

The working groups were given 90 minutes to consider the following questions:

In the light of the plenary presentations - what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?

Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national/European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and the next 3 years?

The report back from the three groups covered the following issues;

Employers' Organisation Group

- There is a need to strengthen the quality and quantity of representation at EU level;
- Increase awareness of the role and importance of EU social dialogue to Polish business;
- Continue to work on a means for more effective employers' organisation coordination and cooperation;
- Establish an ongoing informal forum where trade unions and employers can discuss non-contentious issues and work together to improve the economic climate in Poland.

Trade union group

- A better identification of industry needs should be used to influence views and actions at the EU level;
- Identify and use best practice bipartite social dialogue models from other countries;
- Note that in a Polish context, binding agreements that translate into concrete obligations might be more effective than agreements relying on "goodwill";
- Motivate Polish employers to participate more positively in the development of agreements. In this context the employers' proposal of an "informal forum" was seen as a welcome step.

Joint Group

- More clarity in the areas of representation and mandate development would be helpful;
- Ideally, an informal bipartite body should be set up and agreements on how to organise and fund it should be reached;
- Promote awareness of the role and importance of EU and national bipartite social dialogue.

Session four - "Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners."

In response to questions and needs expressed by the national social partners during the 2004 phase of the project the European level social partners have undertaken a range of activities to improve the effectiveness of the participation of new member states in the European social dialogue. Jeanne Schmitt of UNICE and Szilvia Borbély of ETUC made presentations covering each of the following subjects;

- Resource centres – the European level social partners have established "employer" and "trade union" resource centres and launched web sites to promote their new services;
- Training and development assistance – direct forms of assistance have been made available by the European social partners to facilitate staff development initiatives e.g. the funding of additional places at European level meetings for developmental purposes and social dialogue skills training events;
- Social partner competence development – a process by which individuals and organisations can "self assess" against a series of "effective European social partner" competencies is now ready for circulation. It is available on the resource centre websites of the European organisations;

The full presentations are included as appendices four and five.

A "tour de table" was then conducted at which each national participant was asked to consider, in the light of the presentations made throughout the day, what they thought to be the most important issues to have emerged from the discussion. The following list of issues does not reflect any priority order or "multiple" mentions of issues. It simply indicates the issues raised and the order in which they were raised.

- There is a need to generate interest in European issues and to create an understanding of their importance to and relevance for Polish employers and trade union members;
- The Polish social partners should be more actively involved in EU level activities;
- Skills development is important, particularly improving language skills;
- Funding issues have to be addressed if effectiveness is to be improved;
- The successful experience of bipartite social dialogue at company and sectoral levels needs to be replicated at the national and EU levels;
- The Polish trade unions and employers should rely less on the government and create space for their own bipartite activities;
- Improvements in representivity need to be addressed;
- Better dissemination of information is needed to promote interest and understanding;
- More "pre" financing, rather than reimbursement, of expenses would ease the cash-flow difficulties of national social partner organisations;

- Finding out where Poland stands in relation to the rest of the new member states regarding social dialogue may provide motivation for future activities. The EU social partners could help with this. The EU level social partners could also provide examples of good practices from other EU member states;
- An informal body where the Polish social partners can come together and discuss both national and EU issues should be created – the important thing will not necessarily be to come to agreements but to meet and discuss a wide range of issues and identify a common agenda. The subjects of the informal economy and information and consultation are potential agenda items.

The experts and European level social partners then commented on what they regarded as the most important issues and priorities for the social partners to consider. Their comments were as follows;

- The development, where possible, of common ground for bipartite discussion is important. The informal/grey economy and national information and consultation obligations have been mentioned by both parties during the discussions and probably provide issues of common interest. Perhaps the best way to convince employers of the importance of social dialogue is to demonstrate through concrete results that it can contribute to solving problems on one or two specific issues that matter to them;
- It will be important for the social partners, to create the space needed for bipartite activities – as it is evident that the space will not be given to you. In this context it is vital to distinguish between the role of government as a State (shaping and deciding policy) and the role of government as an employer;
- Maximum advantage should be taken of the support that the EU social partners are currently offering. At this time funding is available and activities are possible ... but this may not always be the case;
- Although reimbursement of expenses from the Commission can take time to process, the programmes offered by the social partners offer extremely rapid reimbursement;
- Bilateral discussions are crucial, but coming to agreement is not an essential outcome. Equally important is having an opportunity to understand where the other party stands and why;
- An improved and more constructive atmosphere has developed between the Polish social partners over the last 18 months. This is something to be proud of and something that can be built on;

- It should be emphasised that it is not a question of choosing between tripartite and bipartite dialogue. These are two complementary activities and should be seen as such;
- One major problem is the amount of information from the EU to be processed through the social dialogue. Efficient selection of priorities and a clear understanding of when and where your voice will be most effective are important matters to work on. Effectiveness of voice is something the European social partners can help with;
- Good practice benchmarks can be useful in providing ideas but should always be adapted to suit a given context. In that sense there is no single “best” practice social dialogue in Europe (or elsewhere).
- Finally, many new members of the EU are looking to Poland to set a “good practice” example itself ... as the biggest and probably the most influential among them.

Session five - “Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues.”

Following a tour de table the working group reports were discussed in the context of the additional inputs during the day. Some areas for improvement had been emphasised by both sets of social partners during the discussions and could be turned into broad action priorities for the social partners individually and collectively. The actions listed below were considered to be both focussed and achievable;

Polish Action Plan

- 1. Promote awareness of the role and importance of EU social dialogue both within and outside Polish social partner organisations;***
- 2. Create an informal forum where the Polish social partners can discuss and learn about each others views so that future joint action can be undertaken;***
- 3. Create the necessary space for bipartite social dialogue at the national level, let it complement, rather than compete with, tripartite activity;***
- 4. Continue developing skills and expertise to improve Polish social partner efficiency at the EU level;***
- 5. Maximise use of the resources provided by the EU social partners.***

At the end of the meeting, thanks were offered to all those involved in the preparation and conduct of the seminar.

List of Appendices

Appendix one	Seminar attendance list
Appendix two	Seminar agenda
Appendix three	European Social Dialogue: Agenda and Priorities for the Future
Appendix four	European Social Dialogue: Employer's Support Tools
Appendix five	European Social Dialogue: Trade Union Support Tools
Appendix six	Agreed Action Plan from the Polish Follow-Up Seminar 2005

APPENDIX TWO

AGENDA

Joint Seminars of the European Social Partner Organisations "CEEC social participation in the European social dialogue: What are the social partners' needs?"

National Seminar: POLAND

Venue: Polonia Palace Hotel, Warsaw

Date: Tuesday 15 November 2005

0900 – 0930	Welcome, introductions and purpose of the day	A Wild in plenary
0930 - 1045	Pre-prepared presentations from the national trade unions, national employers and a national joint presentation; "Report on the implementation of the action plan – the presentations should include what went well, what proved difficult, what we were unable to implement and why?"	Plenary session
1045 - 1100	Coffee Break	
1100 - 1145	European level social partner presentation on the likely European Social Dialogue agenda and priorities for the future	Plenary session
1145 - 1150	Briefing of working groups (employers, trade unions and joint)	A Wild in plenary
1150 - 1315	Three groups work on the questions: "In the light of the plenary presentations – what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?" "Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national / European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and in the next three years?"	Three working groups
1315 - 1445	Lunch Break	
1445 - 1530	Presentations from the working groups and questions on the proposed actions	Plenary session
1530 - 1615	Presentation by the EU social partners on the employers and trade union "support tools" and questions: 1. resource centres 2. training sessions 3. competence development project	Plenary session
1615 – 1630	Coffee Break	
1630 – 1715	General discussion on the possible content / priorities of future action plans following the presentations from working groups and the EU social partners	Plenary session
1715 – 1800	Consensus building session and agreement on the key issues and specific actions to be taken by trade unions and employers individually and jointly in the next 12 months and in the next three years	Plenary session
1800	closing remarks	Plenary session

AGREED ACTION PLAN FROM THE POLISH FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

<p style="text-align: center;">Polish Social Partner Action Plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be implemented by trade unions and employers' organisations individually and jointly</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Promote awareness of the role and importance of EU social dialogue both within and outside Polish social partner organisations;2. Create an informal forum where the Polish social partners can discuss and learn about each others views so that future joint action can be undertaken;3. Create the necessary space for bipartite social dialogue at the national level, let it complement, rather than compete with, tripartite activity;4. Continue developing skills and expertise to improve Polish social partner efficiency at the EU level;5. Maximise use of the resources provided by the EU social partners.