

European CSR news for the postal sector



Keeping up with European news about Corporate Social Responsibility is a way to support the international growth of the postal sector.

Today the expansion of the postal sector is taking place at both a European and global level. Its activity is being influenced by what is at stake in Brussels, but also by decisions made among European main players.

The challenges are mostly economic as the boom of e-commerce more than ever requires to be able to reach beyond national boundaries. In the same way, the EU regulation is constantly impacting the historical postal market.

Social aspects are also crucial. The postal sector is one of the largest European employers and regarded as such by all stakeholders. Social transformations raise similar challenges for all major postal operators which are bound to compare and share their practices. Last but not least, CSR being increasingly influenced by European initiatives, postal operators should be aware of these initiatives to be able to anticipate as much as possible.

Therefore, supporting international development within the postal sector implies a better understanding of European social affairs at several levels. At the European level, it means a better knowledge of the EU Institutions and the social partners. On a national level likewise, as postal operators are always seeking to improve their social framework and CSR policies. That is why we are publishing this newsletter in order to identify practical tools that may help both experts and managers.

As this first issue shows, there is currently a wealth of CSR news in Europe, both sectoral and cross sectoral ones. Discussions about a European CSR directive stress out the important part the European Union plays in the field. With the development of new means of communication and the globalisation, a European standardisation about personal data protection is fundamental as well.

As for the postal sector itself, European social partners have enhanced the importance of environmental matters through the signature of the "CSR Joint Conclusions on Environment". This initiative should be a tool to reinforce our commitment to better fight against climate change. There is also a strong social dialogue within several Member States such as Austria and Germany, where postal services have signed wage settlements with the unions, or with Geopost's European Works' Council negotiations for a CSR charter.

Dominique Bailly,
Chairman of the Social Responsibility circle



Personal data protection: Europe still working (page 2).

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EU & you



General mobilisation for youth employment

23.5% of European youngsters are looking for a job. The credibility, and to some extent the viability, of the EU is at stake, to avoid having a "lost generation." All institutional stakeholders – public authorities and social partners – are mobilised for youth employment.

The EU is going to mobilise €6 billion over 2 years for youth employment. This amount will be divided between the Member States depending on their youth unemployment rate and will be used to fund measures like the "Youth Guarantee," which aims to ensure that people under 25 receive an offer for quality employment, training, apprenticeship or further education within four months of finishing their education or becoming unemployed. Other initiatives, notably aiming to promote mobility for young jobseekers and to develop Erasmus for apprentices, will be funded this way.

The EU cannot do anything if the Member States do not take action

However, amounts remain moderate. The International Labour Organisation claims that €21 billion would be necessary to finance an effective youth employment policy for all EU countries. This European ambition mostly aims to be a lever encouraging the Member States to define and improve support for young jobseekers and reduce the gap between labour market needs and skills. Governments are responsible for fostering the right conditions, by investing their own money and adopting adequate measures to improve the way the labour market works, in order to reinforce the EU's efforts. The European social partners have signed a Framework of Actions on Youth Employment. They have listed four priorities – learning, transition, employment and entrepreneurship – on which they want to take action. Learning and apprenticeship are the number one priority of this framework of actions.

More than
23% of
European
youngsters are
unemployed.



The protection of personal data, a challenge for Human Resources

A draft regulation on the protection of personal data is currently being discussed. It includes an in-depth review of existing rules and should have a major impact on employers' obligations with regards to their employees' data.

The draft regulation on the protection of personal data, currently being debated by various institutions, should in theory make things simpler for employers as national rights on the subject would all become the same. Although it builds to protect internet users against Facebook and other social media giants, it really reinforces the obligations of all data managing structures, but lacks defining special rules to deal with the way companies handle their employees' information.



Better transparency in CSR practices

A draft directive introducing the obligation for businesses with more than 500 employees, annual sales of at least €20 million or net sales of €40 million to publish non-financial information about their activity, is currently being discussed.

Business will have to report information on "at least environmental matters, social and employee-related matters, respect for human rights, corruption matters." They will also have to report actions taken in these fields, their results as well as existing risks and what they have done to face them. Companies that do not adopt policies on these matters should clearly

explain why. The draft gives businesses a lot of room for manoeuvre in the resources they use to achieve the new transparency objective defined by European laws.

Reporting on diversity

The proposal extends the reporting obligation to include the company's diversity policies. Thus, reports will have to disclose objectives and policies aimed at ensuring diversity in management and on the board, notably as far as age, gender, geographical origin, educational and professional background are concerned. If the company doesn't have a policy on these matters, it will have to explain why in its report.

Strong obligations

Impact assessment, obligation to inform people as soon as possible if someone other than the person in charge of processing data has had access, better employee information and a particularly harsh sanction system (up to 1 % of the revenue for the most severe cases). In addition, businesses with more than 250 employees will also have to appoint a data protection officer.



European Posts



The European Social Dialogue Committee committed to get the postal industry greener

On April 4, the European Social Dialogue Committee in the postal sector, representing social partners in the postal industry – PostEurop for the employer side and UNI Europa for the employees – issued CSR joint conclusions on environment. This document shows the commitment of these organizations to take on responsibility for environmental issues.

CSR is a familiar theme for the European Social Dialogue Committee in the postal sector for a longtime. A dedicated working group has been investigating the environment issue since 2011. The joint conclusions negotiated by the social par-

tners recognize the postal sector's share of responsibility in lessening the environmental impact of its activities. They reveal some interesting practices implemented by the postal companies and trade unions.

Act internally and externally

In addition to these good practices, the conclusions point out that postal operators have a special responsibility, internally and with their subcontractors, to reduce their environmental footprint. However, because of its role in society, the postal sector also has a role to play in raising citizens' awareness on environmental issues. Namely, they offer "green products and solutions" to their customers, i.e.

developing a "wider range of low-carbon/carbon-neutral products and services respecting the environment in order to help their customers reduce their carbon footprint and generate value."

Raise employees' awareness

As far as the stakeholders' commitment is concerned, the conclusions point to employees' vital role in improving postal operators' environmental performance. The conclusions underline that "it is important to raise employees' awareness, thus favouring their acceptance of environment-related change." Possible tools to achieve employees engagement include training and social dialogue.



Deutsche Post employees to receive a pay raise in 2013 and 2014

The approximately 130,000 employees of Deutsche Post who are covered by a collective-bargaining agreement will earn more money this year and next year. The pay raise was reached at the conclusion of collective-bargaining negotiations conducted by the German services union ver.di and Deutsche Post AG. As part of the agreement, pay will increase by 3.1 percent on August 1, 2013, and by another 2.6 percent on October 1, 2014. At a minimum, pay will rise by a gross total of EUR 2,200 per employee during the life of the collective-bargaining agreement.



Pay deal at Österreichische Post AG

The management of Österreichische Post AG and the Union of Post and Telecommunications Employees (GPF) reached an agreement, on June 18, for a 2.7 percent wage increase with a minimum guarantee of €45 per month for the Österreichische Post's 19,000 employees. It came into force on July 1, 2013. The agreement also provides for the creation of a working group that will have to come up with proposals to better adjust the work rhythm and professional environment to demographic ageing. Meanwhile, debates continue on the issue of the composition of pay. Indeed, the CEO of Österreichische Post AG would like to introduce a variable component based on merit and customer satisfaction.



A European CSR Charter at GeoPost

The Geopost Group signed with the European Works Council a Social Responsibility Charter during a plenary session in Berlin on May 17. This Charter relates to both GeoPost employees' and its subcontractors'.

According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) principles and the national legislations, the Charter aims at ensuring that dialogue prevail for smooth industrial relations. The purpose of the Charter is also to remind all stakeholders of the trade union freedom guarantees. It emphasized the GeoPost Group desire to assume its social responsibility for its employees, subcontractors, partners and suppliers likewise.



News from member States



Historical social agreement in Belgium

On July 5, the government and the social partners reached an agreement on the sensitive issue of the single status for blue-collar and white-collar workers. The subject has been debated for 27 years, but the deadline set by the Constitutional Court (in July 2011, it gave them two years to get rid of discrimination that arises from the layoff notice and waiting day) served as a goad. From January 1, 2014 the waiting day (unpaid wages) in case of a sick leave, which only applies to blue-collar workers, will be removed. Besides, the agreement provides for the same calculation modalities of the notice period in case of employment contract termination for all, blue-collar workers' used to be shorter. The measures will be gradually implemented over three and a half years, to lessen the financial impact for businesses. In average, the new agreement aims for a notice period of 3 months for 5 years in the company. However, this new status doesn't remove all the differences there are between blue-collar and white-collar workers. In the long run, blue-collar workers may want equal standards for other elements, for instance holiday pay, pay scales, trial periods, disability health insurance or even the supplementary pension scheme.



Italian national 2012-2014 action plan for CSR

Information, training, spreading the best practices are the primary tools thought of, pursuing two major goals:

- Spreading, among businesses and young people, the "importance of an integrated and strategic [CSR] approach" in the way the company is managed;
- Raise citizens and consumers' awareness of CSR, avoid "unfair behaviours" in businesses (e.g. green or social washing), and restore trust between public administrations, businesses and citizens. The plan notably provides for the creation of a "multi-stakeholders" network with the chambers of commerce, employers' organizations, unions and other stakeholders, to adapt mechanisms and tools to individual technological and production subsidiary.

More "market incentives"

In order to boost "economic return" on CSR, the government is thinking about stepping in for consumers and the public service to get more products and services from responsible businesses. To raise citizens' awareness, there will be systems making responsible businesses more visible, for example with the introduction of awards. It also provides for the creation of "public demand" by promoting the adoption of social and environmental criteria in public contracts and the definition of guidelines to include social clauses on disabled workers in public contracts. It also recommends initiatives improving the transparency of information given by financial institutions and investment funds.



Labour market reform in France

With the reform adopted in May, France joins the list of countries that have adjusted their labour market "at the request" of Brussels to improve their competitiveness. For businesses, this law provides greater legal security for layoff procedures, both in terms of disputes and of deadlines for informing and consulting workers. It introduces mechanisms to avoid layoffs, like measures to facilitate internal mobility and secure employment agreements where working conditions are adjusted in return for guaranteeing employment. Employees receive new rights, including participation on the boards of large businesses, and unemployment insurance benefits.

AGENDA

September 18, 2013: PostEurop CEO Forum

September 19, 2013: PostEurop 20th anniversary Plenary Assembly

December 2, 2013: Annual Plenary of the Social Dialogue Committee

May 25, 2014: European Parliament elections

October 31, 2014: End of term of the Barroso Commission

