

European CSR news for the postal sector



The transformation of the postal sector, a social challenge today

With mail volumes going down faster and faster, the social issue is back in the forefront, both from a competences and employment perspective. The social dimension is today at the heart of the debates and latest developments in the postal sector. What are the concrete possibilities of redeployment from mail to diversification activities, in particular parcels? How to manage the necessary adjustment of functions? How to upgrade employees' skills?

These were the main questions raised during the latest conference of the European Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector, which took place in Brussels on 7 February 2014, and gathered postal operators and trade unions from 24 European countries as well as high-level experts. To date, strategies for social transformation show a limited use to far-reaching social measures and a sustained investment in supporting the change process. The nature of employment issue, in particular in delivery, is also a challenge in the parcels' market as shown by the debates of the 3rd Postal Users Forum.

Sectoral news confirms this trend: postal operators, like in Switzerland and the United-Kingdom, have taken measures to support change and manage the optimisation of employment.

In parallel, new offers that better answer customers' evolving needs call for an almost continuous evolution of organisations and the creation of new functions. This is a vital challenge for the sector, which requires adjusting skills to these new jobs. This topic has been under scrutiny in the framework of a project dedicated to matching skills and jobs in the postal sector.

At the same time, the European Commission's initiatives in the field of anticipation of changes and socially responsible restructurings as well as in the reinforcement of social and environmental criteria in the award of public procurements show the will to extend the scope of CSR to employment issues.

These various subjects set the pace for the postal sector during this first semester where the social issue becomes always more important in the elaboration of operators' strategies.

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MORE ROOM FOR SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CRITERIA IN PUBLIC PROCUREMENT

HOW DO YOU MANAGE TO BE TWICE CHEAPER THAN YOUR COMPETITORS?

PROFESSIONAL SECRECY.



Public procurements: more social and environmental criteria. (page 2)

Contents

- **EU & you** 2
 - Good practices on socially responsible restructurings
 - Public procurements: more social and environmental criteria
 - European social partners in the banking sector publish joint Statement on CSR
- **European Posts** 3
 - Project "Matching skills and jobs in the postal sector"
 - Single framework agreement for all group undertakings at Swiss Post Ltd
 - Royal Mail : continued efficiency programme
- **News from member States** 4
 - The obligation to justify layoffs arrives in Belgium
 - New rules on parental leave and training in Finland
 - Bulgaria starts supervising internships



EU & you



Good practices on socially responsible restructurings

On 13 December 2013, the European Commission released a quality framework for socially responsible restructurings. This document lists examples of good practices on anticipation and investment into human capital to help businesses adapt and limit the social impact of restructurings.

These practical guides are aimed for employers, employees themselves, unions and employers' organizations, and the public authorities. The Commission wants them to take hold of these guides. National governments are responsible for supporting initiatives designed to help them spread. As well businesses, workers, unions and employers' organizations have to take them over, working together based on defined guidelines.



Public procurements: more social and environmental criteria

Following the review of the directives that supervise the award of public contracts in general, as well as those on the provision of postal services, the procurement criterion mostly based on price is replaced by the Most Economically Advantageous Tender (MEAT) criterion.

This new regulation will have to be transposed in the Member States by April 2016. With the new MEAT criterion in the procurement procedure, the authorities may choose more expensive offers considered as more suited and more respectful of social and environmental laws.

In order to avoid social dumping and ensure that labour law is applied, the new provisions also introduce more severe rules on "abnormally low bids". Within this

For the first time in European literature on the subject, a document issued by the Commission talks about anticipating change and restructurings in the public sector, which is a key stake in the years to come because of the budget cuts raging through Europe.

These good practices refers to the following axes: strategic long-term monitoring of market evolutions; constantly assessing jobs and skills needs; training measures, professional guidance and assistance to facilitate professional transitions. Besides, they point out how important it is to involve outside stakeholders early, like public authorities, universities, training centres. Thus allowing management of restructurings based on a joint diagnosis.

framework, tenderers that are unable to explain the reasons for this low cost may be excluded from the competition. Besides, for the first time, transparency measures are introduced when a company receiving a contract is subcontracting part of the market. The main contractor will have to determine, before the contract is awarded, the part of the market it wants to contract out, and to provide information about the subcontracting firm.

Other novelty: the Member States have to take adequate measures to ensure that, when performing a public contract, economic operators comply with the applicable statutory obligations in social and environmental terms as established by European and national laws, collective agreements or international provisions on social, environmental and labour law.



European social partners in the banking sector publish joint Statement on CSR

European social partners in the banking sector have signed on 31 January 2014 a joint Statement on CSR. It revises the joint Statement signed in 2005, taking into account the sector's current challenges after the financial crisis. The statement points to social dialogue as a means of restoring trust in the financial sector and managing change.

The Statement was signed by the organizations involved in the banking sector's European social dialogue committee, namely UNI Europa Finance for unions and the European Association of Co-operative Banks, European Banking Federation and the European Savings and Retail Banking Group for employers. The signing parties consider that the joint statement on CSR is "a positive signal which they envisage to send also to bank sector social partners at national level," taking into account of the sector's current challenges after the financial crisis. More precisely, the statement recommends using social dialogue as a means to adjust to or manage change. The statement also focuses on a few core issues: training, internship and skills development, core labour standards, work-life balance, internal communication and equal opportunities.





European Posts



Project "Matching skills and jobs in the postal sector"

The European social dialogue committee for the postal sector (SDC) conducted an EC-funded project in 2013 entitled «Matching Skills & Jobs in the European postal sector» co-financed by the European Commission.

Two questions to Barbaro Francesco Costa from Poste Italiane, Chairman of the SDC Training working group.

• How was this project born?

Since the end of the 90s, the Committee has been deeply involved in the topic of skills development through its Training working group. In 2006, we agreed on a joint declaration on the development of training and skills that already stressed skills' development as a fundamental factor in facing market changes. On this basis, we continued our work to identify key skills for the postal market. This gave us ground to prepare this one-year project on «matching skills and jobs in the postal sector». This project focuses both on traditional

activities such as sorting and delivery but also on emerging activities (financial and digital ones), with a particular focus on competences' certification and the role of social dialogue.

• What are its main outcomes?

One of the main outcomes is the quantity but also the quality of the answers received from the postal operators and unions of the 27 EU countries. This shows the importance the social partners give to this initiative. A first lesson is the need for anticipating skills needs and the sector's changes. The second is the requirement for an increased flexibility and adaptability of employees. Finally, an important outcome is the significance of certification and transferability of skills. Based on these lessons, we plan to negotiate a new joint statement to formalize the importance of the topic for the sector. The report of the project is to be released.

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Royal Mail: continued efficiency programme

Royal Mail continuously focuses on efficiency. As part of this programme, it will launch formal consultation with Unite and CWU (Communication Workers Union), with a proposal to achieve a reduction of around 1,600 roles. At the same time, around 300 new roles will be created or enhanced. The vast majority of employees impacted will be in the Group's operational and head office managerial population. This initiative won't impact frontline employees, including postmen and women, or the services Royal Mail provides to its customers. The programme is expected to deliver annualised cost savings of around M£50 (~61 M€) of which approximately M£25 (~36 M€) will be realised in 2014-15.



Single framework agreement for all group undertakings at Swiss Post Ltd

Within the framework of the transformation of Swiss Post Ltd into a limited company, the social partners negotiated a general collective agreement. On February 2014, they reached an intermediary agreement that guarantees, for all of the group's subsidiaries (PostBus Switzerland Ltd, PostCH Ltd, PostFinance Ltd,), a single agreement for Swiss Post holding. After the negotiation, the 61,000 employees will all receive a new contract. Regarding working time, the social partners announced that the reference would remain the 42-hour week. However, the principle of automatic wage increase based on seniority is cancelled.

Instead, the social partners agreed to introduce individual variable pay amounting to 0.4 percent of the payroll, which will be divided in accordance with employees' performance. Finally, annual minimum wage will go from CHF 47,000 to 50,000 (€ 38,652 to € 41,119).

Negotiations on the Collective agreement for Swiss Post Ltd, PostFinance Ltd, PostBus Switzerland Ltd, is expected to be conclude this year. Decision-making bodies of the Post and the unions will then accept the overall result after the end of the negotiations.

The Social Dialogue Committee organised a **conference on the sector's social transformation**. It gathered, on February 7, numerous postal and European trade union experts as well as high-level speakers from the Commission, PostEurop and UNI Europa.

The employment issue entered the debate of the **3rd Postal Users Forum**, held on March 31.



News from member States



The obligation to justify layoffs arrives in Belgium

A collective Agreement that came into force on April 1, 2014 introduces the obligation to justify layoffs for all employees in Belgian law.

A new chapter in the harmonization of blue-collar and white-collar workers' statuses (see Post&You No. 1, p. 4), the Agreement negotiated in February, introduces a new obligation: justifying layoffs. Until now, when employers wanted to dismiss a white-collar worker, they did not have to explain their actions. However, they had to do so with blue-collar workers.

Since 1 April, employers have to give a reason for the layoff to all employees who have been in the company for 6 months or more upon request. This demand has to be made within 2 months after the end of the employment relationship. Employers will have 2 months to provide the information, or they will have to pay a fixed fine. The collective Agreement also introduces sanctions in the event of flagrantly unfair dismissal.



New rules on parental leave and training in Finland

Support for children care

Since January 1, 2014, people with children under the age of 3 now receive a 'flexible care' allowance if they work part-time and stay with their kids the rest of the time. It amounts to €160 or €240 per month depending on the number of hours worked. Both parents can receive the allowance at the same time if they both work and care for their children.

Vocational training

Finnish employees are entitled to 3 training days a year to develop their professional skills. The employer, who can get a tax rebate if training meets certain criteria, funds them. Each company with 20 workers or more needs to develop a program for the enhancement of its employees' professional skills. This plan is discussed with the employee's representatives before the employer adopts it.



Bulgaria starts supervising internships

Last January, the government presented a draft amendment of the Labour Code "for alleviating the administrative burden for the business". For the first time, the draft also regulates in-house internships, imposing the signing of a special employment contract.

This amendment, currently being discussed, mostly aims to cut red tape related to employees and also enhances the labour inspectorate's powers to face undeclared labour. It also introduces a new type of contract to supervise internships.

Only people under the age of 29 with no experience in their field of study may be accepted for a corporate internship. The company will have to draw up a labour contract for at least 6 months to one year. The intern has to be supervised by a tutor who has at least 3 years of significant experience. The tutor's contract will have to take responsibilities regarding the intern and the number of hours spend with him. The skills learned during the internship will be subject to assessment and certification by the employer. Finally, the intern must be paid, at least minimum wage.

AGENDA

- **May 22-25, 2014:** European elections
- **June 16-17, 2014:** 1st regional seminar of the SDC on age management
- **June 19, 2014:** PostEurop Management Board meeting
- **September 24-25, 2014:** PostEurop Plenary meeting

