

European CSR news for the postal sector



POST EUROPE
YOUR LINK TO POSTAL EXPERTISE

COP 21 conference, the postal sector already committed



The COP21 was held from 30 November to 11 December in Paris. It led to a universal agreement adopted by 195 countries to come into force in 2020 to contain global warming well below 2 °C, if possible 1.5 °C. Given its geographic scope and its significant fleet of vehicles, the postal sector has, for a long time now, been active in reducing its negative effects on the environment through various innovative means.

Alternative vehicles

Several postal operators have invested over the last decade in alternative and hybrid vehicles. Thus postal companies in Austria, France, Germany, Malta, Monaco and Switzerland are replacing their combustion engines with better environmentally friendly alternatives. Operators like Omniva and Posti are also working to optimise current fleets by implementing traceability systems geared to improving both fuel consumption and optimising driving techniques.

Eco-driving

Eco-driving is a priority for postal operators. It has enabled to decrease up to 15% of fuel consumption, 20% of insurance claims, 10% of vehicle maintenance charges and 15% of the carbon footprint. Correos, bpost, La Poste and Poste Italiane have all put in place these types of initiatives. CTT Correios and bpost have also launched internal eco-driving competitions so as to incentivize their colleagues in an entertaining way to become more aware of the impact their driving has on the environment.

Reduction in buildings' consumption

Österreichische Post AG has looked to producing energy by installing a rooftop photovoltaic system at one of its production units. It can thus supply the energy needs of its fleet of electricity powered vehicles. Poste Italiane has implemented an energy management and monitoring system in all its buildings. Malta Post has installed solar glazing panels on some of its windows to significantly reduce the summer heat, which turn out to be a simple low-cost measure to reduce air conditioning energy consumption.

Recycling

Circular economy concerns are also growing. Local collection measures, for example La Poste Recy'Go office documents recycling initiative and Swiss Post recycling of postal workers' uniforms initiative, all contribute to the stock of innovative and easily transferable measures that the European operators can implement.

All the above are concrete proof of the postal sector's commitment to reducing its negative impact on the environment. The sector is constantly changing, innovating, investing, and thus contributing to both European and global efforts in the fight against global warming.

**COP 21 ...
THE POSTS ARE ALREADY
GETTING COMMITTED...**

YOU CUT
THE ENGINE
DOWNHILL
AND PUSH
THE CAR
UPHILL...



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Post & you
and the CSR circle wish
you all the best for 2016





EU & you



European social partners to negotiate an agreement on active ageing

The 5th autonomous work programme developed between ETUC (European Trade Union Congress), the business leaders organization BusinessEurope, CEEP (European Centre of Employers and Enterprises providing Public Services), and the UEAPME (European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises) is entitled "Partnership for inclusive growth and employment". It outlines the roadmap for joint action by the European social partners for the period 2015-2017.

Since their "emancipation" from the European Commission, the inter-sectoral European social partners have been autonomously concentrating on their work programme where they have defined the subjects they intend to treat and the initiatives they plan to undertake. For this 5th edition they have taken up a method that has been put aside for several years, that is to say the negotiation of a European agreement. This agreement will focus on "active ageing and a cross-generational approach." The work

programme also raises the need for the European social partners to exchange best practices and initiatives with respect to maintaining employment (flexible working time, progressive retirement plans), developing mentorship, and transferring skills and competencies. Like the earlier agreements on teleworking (2002), stress (2004), and work-related harassment and violence (2007), this new agreement on older workers will be autonomous, that is to say non-binding, and the national social partners will be responsible for its implementation.

As regards the other autonomous agreements that have been implemented in an unequal and diverse way throughout the EU, the social partners commit to working on improving their deployment and will devote special attention to the 8-10 Member States that are considered lacking in this regard. In addition, the work programme foresees seminars and exchanges of best practices with respect to occupational gender equality as well as common conclusions on a better work-life balance.



Consultation of the European social partners on work-life balance

On 11 November the European Commission started the first phase of consultations with the European social partners over "Possible action addressing the challenges of work-life balance faced by working parents and caregivers." At this stage of the consultation process the social partners are being asked their opinion on the EU Commission's assessment of inadequacies with current legislation and proposals for improvements. For the European Commission, policies that introduce more balance by including flexible work and leave solutions as well as arrangements to encourage fathers to take up their leave allowance would be

useful. Such rights could also benefit workers who care for close dependents and the elderly. Thus the Commission believes that parental leave could be made more flexible by breaking it up over time and by being able to take it up on a part time basis, and the age ceiling (of the child) for taking up parental leave could also be raised. Similarly, improving conditions for breast feeding mothers, strengthening their protection from redundancy during this period, and developing other types of leave, for example a special fathers' leave or special leave to take care of dependents, could all contribute to a better work-life balance.



Combatting tax fraud from multinationals

The fiscal ruling is a practice allowing companies to directly engage with the fiscal authorities in order for the companies to secure an advance ruling on the tax to which they would be subject to. But in some cases it consists in tax gifts from States to attract companies onto their soil. After the Luxleaks scandal broke, which highlighted certain 'tax rulings' agreed by Luxembourg's tax authority with multinational companies in order to have them be fiscally domiciled in the country, the president of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, committed to combatting tax evasion and fraud. At a time when many European States are grappling to maintain their public services and social systems and when ordinary citizens are shouldering much of the burden, acceptance of elaborate company tax reduction has greatly diminished.

To this effect, at the start of October, and following an extraordinarily rapid procedure, European Finance Ministers unanimously (unanimity was required) adopted an agreement for the automatic exchange of information on tax agreements concluded between Member States and multinationals.

First round of businesses under investigation

The European Executive ordered some companies to pay back between €20 and €30 million to States under the heading 'illegal fiscal advantage' from which they were deemed to have benefited. The European Commission terms such arrangements that these companies have enjoyed as 'illegal State aid' in terms of EU unfair competition.





European Posts



bpost comes to an agreement over an “agile” working organisation

On 29 October, the Belgian postal operator and the social partners came to agreement over new Mail Service Operations (MSO) plan in a bid to become more attractive in the competitive parcels deliveries market as well as better managing changing postal volumes. In the agreement the company will incorporate Saturdays into a five-day week and the two-hour extra pay that had been awarded for Saturday work will no longer apply. The working week will remain at five days and Saturday workers will receive a day in lieu. In addition, a new type of flexible work is being implemented in the sorting centers and com-

prises services that are termed “agile”. With this initiative employees voluntarily accepted that after having received several hours prior notice, their working hours can be modified in line with fluctuations in work volumes. In addition, the MSO plan intends to cater for the extra weekend work needed to cover the end of year holiday period. The agreement intends to maintain the compensation levels as specified for 2015 but these will not be continued into 2016. As a balance, the agreement intends for the maintenance of recourse to existing bpost colleagues when managing these activities.



First collective agreement for private postal services in Switzerland

On 30 November, the employers’ federation, KEP & Mail (Kurier, Express, Paket & Mail) which represents DHL, DPD, FedEx, and TNT, together with the postal sector’s unions announced the signing of their first ever collective agreement (CCT). Recent talk over the possible liberalization of Switzerland’s postal market accelerated what had been up until then a painstakingly slow process. The CCT will come into force on 01 July 2016.

The social partners indicated that they first wanted to inform the sector’s 3,000 workers of the details of the agreement before rendering it public and they also asked the government to broaden the agreement’s scope so that it can apply to the whole postal sector. If the government does extend its scope then Swiss Post will have to modify its own company agreement accordingly. “Digitalization of the economy will also bring new actors into the market, like we saw in the USA with the arrival of Amazon in the postal market and also with Uber. It is therefore important that these companies recognize their obligation to keep to the same rules as us if they want to operate in Switzerland”, stated Peter Sutterlütli, President of KEP & Mail.



New five-year agreement at PostNL to manage reorganisation

On 2 December, and following an earlier vote in favor by PostNL workers, a new five-year agreement was signed with the unions enabling the postal operator to adapt itself in the face of a continual drop in mail volumes. The agreement contains a job search programme (External Mobility) intended to give careers coaching and to help employees find new jobs outside the company. The agreement also contains a six stage restructuring plan, including re-categorising internal positions and notably

compensating salary adjustments spread over several years if employees have to lower their hierarchical level. Age related measures are also part of the plan including reduced working time for those aged 60 and above, a voluntary departure scheme and in the end if employees’ numbers are still too high a redundancy plan is also envisaged. The sooner employees leave the higher will be their financial compensation amount. The agreement is due to come into force on 1 January 2016 and runs for five years.



Deutsche Post DHL at the forefront in managing the refugees’ influx

Shortly after German Chancellor, Angela Merkel stated that Germany will be receiving refugees in a comprehensive manner, DPDHL Group (Deutsche Post DHL Group) presented on 17 September its own contribution to assisting in the refugees’ integration. Deutsche Post DHL Group has committed to making €1 million available per year in aid to refugees. The company cooperates with several NGOs active in

language acquisition and reading, as well as offering vocational support. The company will also offer apprenticeships to 1,000 refugees to provide an insight into working life in Germany. The initiative will be supported by a network of 10,000 ‘corporate volunteers’; employees who, with the support of the company, are voluntarily committing themselves to helping the refugees.



News from member States



The Belgian government initiates its fiscal shift

This is the key political and social issue for the coalition government's focus after its return from the summer recess. In order to reduce Belgium's "wage handicap" as compared with its competitors, the government is looking to shift some of the tax burden currently shouldered by employers over to other forms of taxation. The government intends to progressively lower employers' contributions from a current maximum level of 33% down to 25% by 2018.

The tax-shift programme also focuses on purchasing power by raising certain allocations and pensions payments as well as revising taxation of low and average salary levels. To pay for these measures the government will raise VAT on electricity up to 21% and taxes on diesel, alcohol, tobacco products, and fizzy drinks. Individual capital income will also be subject to higher taxes but the government still has to agree on the details.



Brexit or not exit

"Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?" This is the question to which the British will respond to in a referendum on the issue due to be held by 2017. Even if the debate has not really started the main professional and political actors have already made their positions known. On the employers' side, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has repeatedly called for the UK to remain in Europe and that despite dissension from various individual businesses. Division is also commonplace among the unions. The Rail, Maritime and Transport union, traditionally anti-European, has stated it will militate in favor of a British exit due to Brussels' led privatization policies. Other unions, that are for the most part pro-Europe, including Unite, GMB, and Unison, have nevertheless refused to exclude a "No" campaign, should maintai-

ning the UK in Europe entail any weakening of social rights.

In effect, one of the key issues at stake is indeed the impact on workers. The Prime Minister David Cameron is hoping that by the time the referendum vote is held he will have secured a full "opt-out" for the UK from European regulations over the labour law and freedom of movement. David Cameron who himself is not personally biased towards an exit finds himself in a delicate situation. If he secures, from the other EU governments, his "social opt-out" and thus in part satisfies the Eurosceptics, he may nevertheless find himself faced with a "No" from both the Europhobes as well as the unions. The new opposition Labor party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, has confirmed that he will not campaign in favor of a Brexit.



New legislation for Irish industrial relations

The "Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2015", adopted this summer, marks a step forward in the fight against social dumping and unfair competition. With the Irish legislation being based on voluntarism, employers are perfectly within their rights to refuse to recognise unions or engage in collective bargaining. The new law puts in place a procedure before the labour tribunal that can lead to the laying down of working conditions being imposed on employers that

are more aligned to those being practised elsewhere. This is especially so if the labour tribunal observes workers in one business are receiving lower pay and experiencing worse working conditions than others working in businesses in the same sector. This legislation also re-establishes the possibility of making sectoral agreements mandatory, thus allowing the application of standards in terms of salaries, retirement, and sick leave, to all businesses in a sector.

AGENDA

- **April 20 & 21, 2016**
PostEurop Plenary Assembly, Yerevan, Armenia
- **April 26 & 27, 2016**
3rd Sustainability Leadership Conference, Paris, France

