

EFTA Seminar on the EEA Spring 2009

Social Policy in Europe: What role for
the EU?

The view of business

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Competence of the Member States

- 30 existing social systems in different EEA Member States
- Total harmonisation not the aim
- Maximum harmonisation
- Minimum harmonisation



The role of the European Social Dialogue

According to Article 138 of the EC Treaty:

- 1. The Commission shall have the task of promoting the consultation of management and labour at Community level and shall take any relevant measure to facilitate their dialogue by ensuring balanced support for the parties.
- 2. To this end, before submitting proposals in the social policy field, the Commission shall consult management and labour on the possible direction of Community action.



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The role of the European Social Dialogue

- 3. If, after such consultation, the Commission considers Community action advisable, it shall consult management and labour on the content of the envisaged proposal. Management and labour shall forward to the Commission an opinion or, where appropriate, a recommendation.
- 4. On the occasion of such consultation, management and labour may inform the Commission of their wish to initiate the process provided for in Article 139. The duration of the procedure shall not exceed nine months, unless the management and labour concerned and the Commission decide jointly to extend it.



The role of the European Social Dialogue

Article 139 of the EC Treaty envisages that:

- 1. Should management and labour so desire, the dialogue between them at Community level may lead to contractual relations, including agreements.
- 2. Agreements concluded at Community level shall be implemented either in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to management and labour and the Member States or, in matters covered by Article 137, at the joint request of the signatory parties, by a Council decision on a proposal from the Commission.



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- New agreement on Parental leave
- Framework agreement on Harassment and violence at work
- Framework agreement on Work related Stress
- Framework agreement on Telework
- Agreement on Inclusive labour markets



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- Joint Labour Market Analysis, 2007

Key challenges:

growth, productivity, employment and social cohesion

- Flexicurity = flexibility + security



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- Flexicurity:
 - active labour market policies
 - social protection
 - labour law and contractual arrangements
 - life long learning policies
 - social dialogue



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- Reconciliation of professional, private and family life, progress report from 2008
- Better reconciliation can help addressing demographic changes and labour market developments



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- Social Partners' work programme 2009-2010
- Initiatives already started:
 - Negotiation and implementation of an autonomous framework agreement on inclusive labour markets;
Already mentioned before
 - Finalisation of the national studies on economic and social change in the EU-27 in order to effectively manage change and restructuring;
 - Negotiation of a framework of actions on employment;
 - Continuation of the work on capacity building for social partners in an enlarged EU, in the EEA and in candidate countries including further developing the activities of the social partners' respective resource centres;
 - Monitoring, assessing and evaluating the implementation of EU social dialogue framework agreements and frameworks of actions;
 - The European social partners will also further develop their common understanding of the various instruments resulting from their negotiations, determine their impact on the various levels of social dialogue, further co-ordinate the various levels of social dialogue and negotiations, including the development of better synergies between European inter - professional and sectoral social dialogue.



The role of the European Social Dialogue

- New initiatives:

- A joint recommendation aimed at contributing to the definition of the Post – 2010 Lisbon agenda, also in the context of the current economic and financial crisis;
- The development of a joint approach to the social and employment aspects and consequences of **climate change policies** with a view to maximising opportunities and minimising negative effects and to identify possible joint actions;
- Jointly monitoring the implementation of the common principles of flexicurity, notably in order to evaluate the role and involvement of the social partners in the process and to draw joint lessons;
- Jointly addressing mobility and economic migration issues and promoting the integration of migrant workers in the labour market and at the workplace in order to identify possible joint actions



View of business on specific social affairs

- Dir. on Working time
- Dir. on Workers' involvement
- European Works Councils
- Posting of workers
- Maternity/Paternity leave and Parental leave



The Economic crisis

- Policy makers and Social Partners have a responsibility to help companies and workers through this recession
- European labour markets should be based on the flexicurity approach

