



Conference on Working Conditions

Brussels, 28 April 2014

The Europe 2020 Strategy sets ambitious targets for increasing employment and reducing poverty. We have put in place the European Semester, the Employment Package and the Social Investment Package in order to guide the Member States in implementing their structural reforms, including their labour market reforms. Through these initiatives, we have addressed the evolving employment and social challenges in a systematic manner and from the perspective of pan-European interest.

The financial and economic crisis has significantly worsened the employment situation both quantitatively and qualitatively within Member States. This situation has increased the pressure on employment and working conditions. Therefore, protecting and improving the quality of work appears even more critical to achieve inclusive growth while meeting the objective of high participation in employment. In order to promote sustainable jobs, action needs to be taken to avoid workers experiencing multiple disadvantages in terms of working conditions and quality of work, in various areas such as working time and work-life balance, training, or exposure to physical and psychosocial risks.

According to Eurofound, just over half (55%) of EU28 workers reported that their skills correspond well with their duties. Across sectors there is little variation of the level of skills match, which ranges from 47% to 60%, but they tend to differ on the nature of the mismatch (over-skilling or under-skilling). Sectors also differ a great deal on the level of job quality and this has important implications. For instance, workers in sectors with poor job quality are twice as likely to report negative outcomes on their health and well-being as workers in sectors with good job quality. Similarly, workers in sectors with poor job quality are about half as likely to be able to do their job when they reach 60 years of age as workers in sectors with good job quality.

Against this background, it is time to identify and promote win-win arrangements. Good working conditions, including a healthy and safe environment, are often associated with high worker motivation, creativity and commitment, leading ultimately, to high levels of productivity.

Social partners and other policymakers – both at European and national level – have great potential to undertake and foster good practices with regard to working conditions and job quality, which is essential in order to meet the Europe 2020 objectives.

This conference will provide the opportunity for a discussion on five specific topics which have in common to strive for the further development at EU level of a consistent and forward-looking approach to working conditions, aiming to ensure high levels of quality, safety and equity at work.

The five topics are: 1. **Occupational health and safety**, how to maintain a high level of protection? 2. **Anticipation and Management of Restructuring**, what concretely works? 3. **Reconciliation of work and private life**, how to succeed in meeting this expectation in the best conditions for all? 4. **Working conditions of trainees**, how to make a traineeship a fair and rewarding experience? 5. **Decent working Conditions outside the EU**, how can we help our partners?

Workshop I (two parts): Occupational Safety and Health, let's stay on course !

The Union has an important role to play in the area of occupational safety and health (OSH). This has been fulfilled by setting minimum requirements for workplaces across the Union, launching and implementing policy actions, and encouraging cooperation between Member States. The improvements achieved in the EU's performance in the area of OSH over the last 25 years are remarkable and can be attributed to a large extent to sustained policy action by the Union, as well as Member States and social partners. The evaluation of the latest OSH Strategy for 2007-2012 showed that the Strategy has been highly relevant, in particular, as regards the positive trend in work accident reduction and promotion of national OSH strategies.

Although substantial progress has been made in this area, an ageing workforce, new and emerging risks, especially as regards work-related diseases, and the implementation of OSH rules in Member states, especially by SMES and microenterprises, remain a challenge. The workshop will identify and discuss the key challenges, objectives and actions for the improvement of health and safety in the workplace and will provide an opportunity for stakeholders to present suggestions in order to take EU policy and strategies forward.

Workshop II: Better anticipating and managing Restructuring

The Commission's new Quality Framework (QFR) highlights good practices of anticipation of human capital evolution within companies as well as of socially responsible restructuring amidst economic hardships. This workshop will present case studies on how stakeholders' cooperation can make the management of change within companies a success, while they can also rely on policies and financial assistance at both EU and national levels.

Workshop III: Paving the way for reconciliation of Work and Private Life

What concretely does the attainment a better work-life balance require from working conditions and arrangements? Is increased flexibility always the answer or could it sometimes lead to counterproductive outcomes? Against the background of consistently rising expectations for a better reconciliation of work and private life, and technological advancements that facilitate non-standard working arrangements, this workshop will provide an opportunity to take stock of how the EU is currently supporting reconciliation, for instance through ESF-funded projects. It will also allow for a reflection on the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead, notably for EU policy and standards in areas such as working time.

Workshop IV: Implementing the Quality Framework for Traineeships

Following a proposal of the Commission, Member States of the EU recently adopted a Quality Framework for Traineeships. This Framework aims to ensure that trainees benefit from a high-quality learning experience, safe from exploitation. It sets as a principle that employers should make clear in advance whether the traineeship will be paid or not, what are its educational objectives, the working conditions and the method of supervision. The implementation of the Framework is challenging for all stakeholders. The present workshop will provide the opportunity to hear academics and representatives of national authorities about the practical implementation challenges, in Member States with different situations and different regulatory traditions and approaches.

Workshop V: Promoting decent working conditions in third countries

According to the EU Treaty, the EU promotes its values in its relations with the wider world and contributes to the observance and development of international law. The European Commission plays an active role in promoting decent work, including working conditions, in both EU internal and external policies. There is a growing interplay between the internal and external dimension of employment and social affairs. The European Commission includes commitments and cooperation on labour rights and working conditions in the sustainable development chapters of EU trade and investment agreements with third countries. Labour rights and working conditions are part of enlargement policy, of EU dialogue with strategic partners and are included in some EU development cooperation and external assistance programs. The EU fosters better working conditions in key global fora and in international organisations (eg. ILO, G20, OECD, United Nations). This workshop will take stock and allow discussing the future challenges.

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Programme

8.00 – 9.00 Registration

9:00 – 10.15 Opening plenary session

10.15 – 10.45 Coffee break

10.45 – 12:45 Workshops I (first part), II and III

12:45 – 14.15 Lunch

14.15 – 16:15 Workshops I (second part), IV and V

16:15 – 16:45 Coffee break

16.45 – 17.45 Closing plenary session

Opening plenary session:

*Chaired by **László Andor** – European Commission, Commissioner responsible for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*

- Introduction by **László Andor**
- Key message from **Monica De Coninck**, Minister for Employment of Belgium
- Key message from **Sandra Polaski**, Deputy Director General, International Labour Organization
- Key messages from:
 - **Bernadette Ségol**, General Secretary, European Trade Union Confederation
 - **Thérèse de Liedekerke**, Deputy Director General, BUSINESSEUROPE

Workshop I: Occupational Safety and Health, let's stay on course!

Part 1 (morning)

*Moderated by **Armindo Silva**, European Commission, DG EMPL – Director 'Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue'*

- Key challenges and objectives for occupational health and safety in the EU in the period 2014-2020, Armindo Silva
- Institutional points of view:
 - *European Parliament, **Pervenche Berès**, Chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee*
 - *EU Presidency, **Antonios Christodoulou**, Director General for working conditions and health, Ministry of Labour, Social Security and Welfare of Greece*
 - *European Economic and Social Committee, **Xavier Verboven**, Vice-President of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship*
- Point of view of the social partners:
 - *Employers, **Kris De Meester**, Spokesperson of the Employers Interest Group of the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work*
 - *Workers, **Wim van Veelen**, Spokesperson of the Workers Interest Group of the Advisory Committee on Safety and Health at Work*

- EU-OSHA multiannual strategy as a contribution to addressing challenges to safety and health, **Dr. Christa Sedlatschek**, Director, European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA)

Part 2 (afternoon)

*Moderated by **Maria-Teresa Moitinho de Almeida**, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Head of Unit 'Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work'*

- The benefits of prevention, **Hans-Horst Konkolewsky**, Secretary General, International Social Security Association (ISSA)
- National approaches to OSH
 - **Kai-Michael Schäfer**, Germany
 - **Daniel Podgórski**, Poland
 - **Yves Calvez**, member of the Senior Labour Inspector Committee (SLIC)
- Fostering implementation of OSH provisions in SME - Points of view of the EU social partners:
 - **François Engels**, FDA /UEAPME
 - **Józef Niemiec**, ETUC
- Synthesis and Reporting by **Francisco Jesus Alvarez Hidalgo**, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Deputy Head of Unit 'Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work'

Workshop II: Better anticipating and managing Restructuring

*Moderated by **Juan Menéndez-Valdés**, Director of Eurofound*

- Presentation of the Arcelor Mittal case in Spain, **Ricardo Rodriguez**, Director, Labour Asociados
- Presentation of the RAG/DSK case in Germany, **Joerg Weingarten**, Research Director, PCG-Project Consult
- Presentation of the Renault/PSA case in France, **Jean-Jacques Paris**, Director, Consulting Europa
- Point of view of the EU social partners
 - **Michael Brodie**, UK /CEEP
 - **Fausto Durante**, CGIL / ETUC
- Lessons learnt - Synthesis and Reporting by **Jean-Jacques Paris**

Workshop III: Paving the way for Reconciliation of Work and Private Life

*Moderated by **Muriel Guin**, European Commission - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Head of Unit 'Labour Law'*

- Contribution of European Social Fund projects to the achievement of better work-life balance
 - Presentation of ESF project 'Balansa', **Dr. Cecilia Nahfeldt**, Director, University lecturer, Centre for gender research, Karlstad university
 - The reconciliation of work and private life under the European Social Fund, **Manuela Geleng**, European Commission - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Head of Unit 'ESF Policy and Legislation'
- Reconciliation in the EU: where do we stand? Recent findings and analysis, **Agnès Parent-Thirion**, Senior Programme Manager, Eurofound.
- Supportive regulation based on strong labour standards: the policy challenge, **Dr. Steffen Lehndorff**, Research Fellow at the Institute for Work, Skills and Training, Duisburg-Essen.
- Point of view of the EU social partners
 - **Jeanette Grenfors**, SALAR /CEEP
 - **Joa Bergold**, LO/ETUC
- Synthesis and Reporting by **Flaminia Bussacchini**, *European Commission - DG Human Resources and Security, Head of Unit 'Equal Opportunities and Working Conditions'*

Workshop IV: Implementing the Quality Framework for Traineeships

*Moderated by **Marco Fantini**, European Commission - DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Deputy Head of Unit 'Sectoral employment challenges, Youth employment and Entrepreneurship'*

- Rules and frameworks: how to make them effective in a difficult labour market situation?, **Dr. Todoli Signes**, Law Faculty University of Valencia
- 2013 guidelines on Traineeship in Italy, **Alessandra Biancolini**, Italian Ministry of Labour
- Success factors in implementing traineeship programmes – the Flemish case (tbc), **Frédéric Geers**, Permanent Representation of Belgium to the EU / Flemish Employment and Vocational Training Service (VDAB)

- Implementing traineeship programmes – the German case, **Daniel Faulenbach**, German Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs
- Point of view of:
 - the EU social partners
 - **Liliane Volozinskis or Helen Hoffmann**, UEAPME
 - **Salvatore Marra**, CGIL/ETUC
 - the Youth Forum: **Marianna Georgallis**
- Synthesis and Reporting by **Marco Fantini**

Workshop V: Promoting decent working conditions in third countries

*Moderated by **Georg Fischer**, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Director of 'Analysis, Evaluation, External Relations'*

- Trade negotiations and working conditions, **Monika Hencsey**, European Commission – DG Trade, Head of Unit 'Trade and Sustainable development, Generalized System of Preferences'
- The Sustainability Compact improving labour rights and factory safety in Bangladesh, **H.E. Ms. Ismat Jahan**, Ambassador of Bangladesh to Belgium, Luxembourg and the European Union
- Safety and health at work in Turkey, **Hakan Ercan**, Professor at Orta Doğu Teknik Üniversitesi, Department of Economics, Middle East Technical University
- The ILO and multilateral cooperation fostering decent working conditions, **Claire Courteille**, International Labour Organisation, Director of Brussels office
- Point of view of the EU social partners
 - **Rebekah Smith**, BUSINESSEUROPE
 - **Tom Jenkins**, ETUC
- Synthesis and Reporting by **Rudi Delarue**, European Commission – DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Deputy Head of Unit 'External Relations, Neighbourhood Policy, Enlargement'

Closing plenary session:

*Chaired by **Michel Servoz**, European Commission, Director General, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion*

Reporting from Workshops

Conclusions by **Michel Servoz**