



Brussels, 16 July 2002

ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME AND CEEP SIGN AGREEMENT ON TELEWORK

Today, ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP signed a framework agreement on telework. The signatory ceremony has taken place in the presence of the Commissioner for Social Affairs and Employment, Ms Anna Diamantopoulou. The novelty of this agreement, concluded after 8 months of negotiations, is that for the first time an EU framework agreement signed by ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP will be implemented by their members, rather than by European legislation.

In terms of content, it

- stresses that Europe must encourage the development of telework in such a way that flexibility and security go together and that the quality of jobs is enhanced, if it wants to make the most of the information society,
- acknowledges that telework is a way of organising work which can correspond to companies' and workers' needs,
- covers different forms of telework but is limited to regular telework in the context of an employment contract or relationship,
- is based on the recognition that teleworkers benefit from the same protection as employees working at the employers premises,
- highlights key areas requiring adaptation or specific attention when working away from the employer's premises, such as data protection, privacy, health and safety, work organisation, training, etc.

In terms of procedures, it

- contains a commitment of the members ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP to implement the agreement in accordance with the practices specific to management and labour in the Member States ,
- leaves the choice of the tools and procedures of implementation to the members of the signatory parties in accordance with national practices,
- includes a procedure for reporting on the actions taken to implement the agreement,
- foresees a possibility to review the agreement after five years if one of the signatory parties so requests,
- invites member organisations in candidate countries to also implement the agreement.

"Approximately 4.5 million employees are currently teleworking in the European Union. Some estimates foresee that the number of teleworkers could reach more than 17 million employees by 2010. The agreement we signed today clearly contributes to the Lisbon goal of turning Europe into the most competitive knowledge-based economy in the world and achieving the necessary balance between flexibility and security" stressed ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP.

A copy of the full text of the agreement is enclosed

Note to the editor

The negotiations on telework between UNICE/UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC were open following on an official consultation of the social partners by the European Commission on the modernisation of employment relations.

According to article 138 of the EU Treaty, the Commission has to consult the European social partners before submitting proposals in the social policy field. On the occasion of such consultations, the social partners can then decide to deal with the subject under consideration through negotiations at EU level. According to article 139 of the EU Treaty, to implement an agreement concluded at European level, the social partners can:

- *either ask the Commission to transmit their agreement to the Council, who then turns it into EU legislation,*
- *or rely on their members to implement it in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to the social partners in the Member States.*

The three framework agreements concluded so far by UNICE, CEEP and ETUC prior to this agreement concerned respectively parental leave, part-time work and fixed term contracts. All three were implemented by a Council Directive.

The telework agreement will be the first agreement ever to be implemented through the voluntary route foreseen in article 139 of the EU Treaty.

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