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# COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

PARTICIPATING IN  
THE EUROPEAN  
SOCIAL DIALOGUE

*.....improving your personal  
effectiveness*

# COMPETENCY ASSESSMENT AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

## INTRODUCING COMPETENCY & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

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"Social dialogue has been at the heart of European social policy development throughout the history of the European Union. The influence of social dialogue has increased steadily over the years to a point where today the European social partners have the ability to have their agreements transposed into legally binding Directives and to reach framework agreements that are subsequently implemented by their trade union and employer member organisations.

With this increase in authority we, the European social partners, have taken on a parallel obligation to work responsibly and efficiently. This is an enormous challenge. It is far from easy to engage in constructive dialogue and reach meaningful agreements within tight time constraints when trade unions and employers' organisations from 25 countries sit around the same table. We proved that the social partners were up to this challenge in "the Europe of 15". We now have to demonstrate that the same is true for "the Europe of 25".

For social dialogue to be effective, those representing trade unions and employers must be able to construct mandates that reflect adequately the views and aspirations of their respective national members on a wide range of complex subjects. They must then negotiate agreements and set up the processes that result in their effective implementation at the national level. To do this well demands an enormous amount of skill and determination on the part of those involved in the social dialogue process.

Following the accession of the 10 new member states in May 2004, the European social partner organisations have undertaken a series of joint actions that aim to make the social dialogue of the 25 as effective as the social dialogue of the 15 had become. Additionally we are building a solid platform of experience for further expansion. One of these joint actions has resulted in the development of the *Competence Assessment and Personal Development Planning* framework (CAPDP). CAPDP is designed to help the national level social partners select the most suitable individuals to represent them at the European level and to establish realistic personal development plans to help further build their competencies. CAPDP will also help in the identification and nurturing of future talent and the recruitment of trade union and employers' organisation representatives for the future.

CAPDP is not an academic or theoretical piece of work. The role profile, competency descriptors and assessment and development tools included in this package were developed using rigorous research and design methodologies. The development of CAPDP involved staff from the ETUC, UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP, together with many of those who represent their national organisations at the European level. CAPDP represents the views of experienced social dialogue representatives on what needs to be done, the range of competencies needed and their relative importance.

We are sure that CAPDP will meet its prime objective of helping those in the new member states to maximise their influence and effectiveness in the fastest possible time. In addition, we hope that all national social partner organisations in the EU will find it a useful and objective contribution to improving their effectiveness at the European level."

## **USING THE COMPETENCY & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS**

CAPDP has been produced by the European social partners in order to help national employers' organisations and trade unions improve the effectiveness of their participation in the European social dialogue process. It does this by providing a structured and objective way for organisations to review the competencies of the individuals available to them and to identify those most likely to prove effective representatives in European social dialogue work now and in the future.

***The framework is intended to help employers' organisations and trade unions make best use of the people resources available to them and to improve the personal effectiveness of those individuals that are selected to represent them in the European social dialogue.***

This short booklet describes on pages 4 and 5, the *job profile* of the effective national social partner representative and the *core competencies* that will lead to effective performance. It explains how the *assessment form* and the *personal development plan* documents included with the booklet allow organisations to assess the current competencies of the individuals available to them and to develop personal development plans that will lead to improved effectiveness. Finally, on pages 6 and 7, the booklet gives a number of ideas for *practical and cost effective ways* in which development needs can be fulfilled.

CAPDP is designed to be a practical and versatile document. Its prime use is to assess the competencies and establish practical personal development plans for employers' organisation staff, trade union staff and others who currently, or may in the future, represent their organisations at the European level. It is also a useful recruitment tool, providing a clear role description and competency assessment format against which candidates can be evaluated. For those organisations that currently use performance appraisal systems, elements of CAPDP might usefully be imported to improve their effectiveness.

CAPDP not only has a variety of uses, it can also be utilised by organisations in different ways. The assessment form is equally capable of being completed by managers or supervisors; jointly by managers and individuals; or for self completion by job holders. With minor modifications, it can be used in 360° assessment processes. The assessment form can also be used by trade union and employers' organisation leaders as a capacity assessment tool for their organisation as a whole.

The way CAPDP should be used is very simple.

### **STEP ONE**

Those to be involved in the assessment—the manager, the individual or both—should read through this booklet, paying particular attention to the job profile and core competencies found on pages 3 and 4.

### **STEP TWO**

Individually or jointly, the manager and the individual should complete the competency assessment form provided. Instructions for completion are found on the form itself. If the form has been completed by both the manager and individual separately, they will need to meet together to review where responses are similar and where they vary. They should discuss any major differences of opinion with the objective of reaching a common view.

### **STEP THREE**

The individual and his/her manager should complete the personal development planning form in order to establish short, medium and longer term development objectives and plans. They will be helped in this process by pages 6 and 7 of this booklet that offer ideas on costs effective ways of assuring development needs are met.

CAPDP is **NOT** a pass/fail test, nor should it be seen as an unpleasant exercise. Its objectives are to review current individual and organisational capabilities against the specific challenges associated with being effectively represented in the European social dialogue, and to develop practical plans to improve individual and organisational effectiveness.

## **THE JOB PROFILE & COMPETENCIES**

### **OUTLINE JOB REQUIREMENTS FOR THOSE REPRESENTING THE NATIONAL SOCIAL PARTNERS IN THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE**

The outline job requirements below were developed by the European social partner organisations ETUC, UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP in conjunction with individuals from national trade unions and employers' organisations that participate regularly in European social dialogue meetings. It is designed to capture in a clear and concise way the responsibilities specifically associated with representational duties in the European social dialogue. It covers the preparation of a national social partner social dialogue strategy; the development of mandates; representing the national social partner in European meetings; and reporting back. In some organisations these responsibilities may be split between various individuals. In other organisations one individual may be expected to undertake all of the tasks below in addition to other nationally based duties.

To be effective, the national social partner representative should be perceived as a credible representative of his/her organisation by the national constituents; the relevant European level representative organisation (i.e. ETUC, UNICE, UEAPME or CEEP); and the bargaining/social partner equivalent at the national level. This will involve having the ability to perform the following tasks;

- ◇ Promote the preparation of an overall social dialogue strategy for the organisation(s) represented that reflects the views and priorities of its constituents in the context of the relevant EU social dialogue activities;
- ◇ Assure the development of, and agreement to, feasible and coherent mandates on specific issues on behalf of those they represent;
- ◇ Communicate the mandate effectively in writing and orally in various formal and informal discussions, exchanges, consultations and negotiations;
- ◇ Understand the issues at stake both from a national and European standpoint;
- ◇ Achieve the best possible outcome for those represented from formal and informal discussions, exchanges, consultations and negotiations on specific issues and in the context of the overall social dialogue strategy;
- ◇ Respond in a timely and effective way to the various demands of the European social partner organisations and to national member organisations;
- ◇ Report back to the organisation(s) represented and to national member organisations on a regular basis, paying particular attention to explaining the rationale behind any compromise solutions reached;
- ◇ Assist in the development of plans for the national implementation of any European level agreements.

## **PERSONAL AND TECHNICAL COMPETENCIES REQUIRED TO FULFIL THE JOB REQUIREMENTS**

### **HIGH PRIORITY OR "MUST HAVE" COMPETENCIES**

<b>Personal effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to work effectively with people of different backgrounds and styles;</li> <li>Active listening;</li> <li>Effective presentation;</li> <li>Networking and coalition building;</li> <li>Negotiating ability and managing the limits of the mandate;</li> <li>Consensus building;</li> <li>Understanding the national standpoints of others;</li> <li>Analysing complex subjects and situations;</li> <li>Effective participation in meetings;</li> <li>Explaining and defending compromise solutions;</li> <li>Self Motivation;</li> <li>Preparation;</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of current labour law and practice in own country;</li> <li>Knowledge of social partner structures and processes in own country;</li> <li>Knowledge of the current EU legal acquis in the social field;</li> <li>Familiarity with issues on the EU social partner agenda;</li> <li>Familiarity with the European Union Social Dialogue procedures;</li> </ul>
<b>Technical skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written and spoken English;</li> <li>Electronic communication.</li> </ul>

*This list of competencies was developed jointly between the European and national level social partners. Using an email survey, the competencies were ranked by participants in the European social dialogue from a longer list of alternatives. The high priority rating - "must have" and the desirable rating - "good to have" were derived from the survey responses. In addition, the social dialogue participants ranked the level of skill required for each competency as "Expert level ability"; "Good practical ability"; or "Basic level ability". This "level ranking" of the competencies can be seen on the CAPDP assessment form.*

### **DESIRABLE OR "GOOD TO HAVE" COMPETENCIES**

<b>Personal effectiveness</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relationship management;</li> <li>Adaptability to changing circumstances;</li> <li>Managing relationships with organisation leaders and with decision making bodies</li> <li>Presenting national problems in a European way;</li> <li>Reporting back;</li> <li>Desire to learn;</li> <li>Reaching appropriate decisions based on analysis of orally presented written and numerical data;</li> <li>Meeting deadlines;</li> <li>Action orientation;</li> <li>Organising and running effective meetings;</li> <li>Managing interpersonal disagreements and finding solutions;</li> <li>Writing reports for policy making committees</li> <li>Writing assessments of alternatives;</li> <li>Clear and concise transmission of ideas in email, summary and full report" forms;</li> <li>Development of a written mandate.</li> </ul>
<b>Professional Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowledge of European decision making procedures</li> <li>Linking theory to practice;</li> <li>Ability to understand and interpret complex legal and quasi legal documents;</li> <li>Familiarity with national expert networks;</li> <li>Knowledge of decision making structures in own country;</li> <li>Knowledge of the European Institutions;</li> </ul>
<b>Technical skills</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mastery of basic Microsoft (or equivalent) packages – Word, PowerPoint, Excel, Adobe reader, Web-builder;</li> <li>Internet research capability;</li> </ul>

## **COST EFFECTIVE WAYS OF DEVELOPING COMPETENCIES**

### **COMPETENCIES TO “RECRUIT” AND COMPETENCIES TO “DEVELOP”**

The competency profile developed for the CAPDP identifies key areas of professional knowledge that rely on personal effectiveness and technical competencies to deliver them.

**Personal effectiveness and technical skills** — The personal effectiveness and technical skills are frequently required at expert level and are difficult to develop in individuals that do not naturally have an orientation towards the desired behaviours. Competence can of course be improved by personal awareness of the need to change and the provision of ideas on how this might be achieved—but it is far better to start with individuals that have a natural orientation towards certain behaviours.

**Professional knowledge** — The professional knowledge requirements are often relatively simple to attain through short courses, briefings or private reading. In this sense they are easier to develop in individuals with a genuine interest in the subject matter but with little or no practical grounding.

**Technical skills** – The most important of the technical skills, written and spoken English at “expert” level, is extremely difficult to attain in the short to medium term, and is described as a “must have” competency. Unless an individual starts from a very high base of linguistic competence, expert level standards are almost impossible to develop in a short period of time ... and to do so is a very expensive and time-consuming exercise. A lesson for most international organisations is that high levels of language ability are developed before individuals reach working age and need to be “hired” rather than “trained”. Where individuals possess excellent skills in all of the other priority areas but do not possess adequate language skills, combining the talents of two people is an obvious, if expensive, short term course of action.

In summary

***When looking for representatives, avoid the temptation to concentrate on professional knowledge at the expense of personal effectiveness or language skills.***

***When making personal assessments, look for concrete evidence that individuals regularly display (or have displayed) the behaviours you are seeking in their current or previous roles or in some out of work activity.***

### **COST EFFECTIVE PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Trade unions and employers’ organisations typically do not have huge training budgets nor can they afford to release their limited staff for lengthy training or experience gaining programmes. For all organisations development initiatives have to deliver good value for money. For national social partner organisations this is even more important.

There is no reason to be deterred from action because of limited budgets. All of the research shows that development happens in the workplace. “Classroom based training” and “book learning” are good ways to develop an intellectual understanding of many topics. To develop proficiency, people have to apply the intellectual understanding in a real world setting. Combining day-to-day experience with effective coaching will help develop the desired level of competence. When looking at development needs, it is good idea to combine classroom learning or self study with more practical application of ideas and techniques inside and outside the workplace. Page 7, planning for costs effective development, provides some simple ideas on how competencies can be developed outside formal training programmes.

## ..... planning for cost effective development

- Read widely** Biographies of trade union and business leaders, politicians and sportsmen/women give good insights into competencies like *"gaining commitment"*. There are many useful books on *time management*, and reading international publications and foreign newspapers help with *understanding different styles and cultures*. Every now and again read a newspaper or magazine in a language other than your mother tongue.
- Use the net** *Sign up for free email updates on issues that are important to you and your job. Make a list of important websites that you will check every day and every week. Good start points include UNICE, ETUC, CEEP, UEAPME, Labourstart, EIRO online, national and international social partner sites and Europa. Build supportive networks by sending items that are interesting to your social partner colleagues—they will soon do the same to you.*
- Use colleagues to help** Share your development plans with a few respected colleagues at work and ask them to give you open and honest feedback on how you are doing. Identify amongst those you know and work with people that are good in the areas you want to develop. Ask them how they developed and honed their competencies.
- Study the best** *Look at the documents that decision takers consider to be well written. What are their characteristics? Why did they succeed in convincing readers? Look at the vocabulary, style, structure and length. Watch effective presenters live and on TV. What makes them good communicators? What can you learn and adapt?*
- Stay aware** Observe group interaction in meetings when different people are speaking. Observe what behaviours move the consensus or take action items forward. Practice them yourself. Observe what actions frustrate the group and work to eliminate them from your meeting behaviour.
- Watch your time** *Keep a detailed time log for a minimum of two weeks. Look at how you have allocated your time between the "urgent" and the "important". Identify time wasting activities and plan to minimise or eliminate them.*
- Plan your priorities** Keep a master list of ongoing projects and activities and use this to set priorities in a daily "to do" list.
- Practice public speaking** *You only get better by practicing. Start by deliberately preparing for important one on one conversation and telephone calls. Offer to make presentations in internal meetings, meetings with members and conferences.*
- Foster key relationships** Make a list of important relationships in your job. Set targets every week for who you will contact. When you travel don't always have lunch or dinner with the same people. Take the initiative and use "business-social" time as an opportunity to meet other colleagues in a less formal atmosphere.
- Practice your languages** *Get into a routine of watching TV news, listening to radio or reading a newspaper in a different language. Find ways to socialise with native speakers of the language you are trying to practice.*
- Work on active listening** When someone makes a complex point, summarise it back to them to check that you have grasped the key points. Practice summarising where a discussion has got to at key points and at the end of meetings.
- Become more e-literate** *Don't let your e-skills stagnate. Spend a little time very day expanding the e-facilities you use. Set up a filing system for your email, set up email groups, get your address book into order, work on attachments, experiment with Adobe and web builder.*

And finally;

### **When writing your Personal Development Plan;**

- ◇ Don't feel that the content has to be too "formal" or "event" driven. Write down the personal things that you plan to do to improve competency development in key areas e.g. listen to the BBC news at least twice per week, make a list of five social partner colleagues in different countries and phone each of them once a week to catch up on general issues. These actions will act as a personal reminder of the commitments to behaviour change that you have made.
- ◇
- ◇ Don't take on too much. Concentrate first on improving just two or three key areas and focus on them.



To assist further with personal and organisational effectiveness in the European social dialogue, the European social partner organisations have launched online resource centres coordinated by ETUC for the trade unions and UNICE for the employers organisations. The resource centres are accessible through the websites of each of the involved organisations. They offer a variety of information; help and advice to aid national social partner organisations improve their effectiveness in the European social dialogue.

<p><b>EMPLOYERS' RESOURCE CENTRE</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.unice.org/erc">www.unice.org/erc</a></p> <p><b>Contact Point:</b></p> <p>Mr Matthew Higham UNICE Av. Cortenbergh 168 B-1000 Brussels Tel: +32 2 237 65 92 Fax: +32 2 237 66 31 <a href="mailto:mh@unice.be">mh@unice.be</a></p>	<p><b>ETUC RESOURCE CENTRE</b></p> <p><a href="http://www.resourceetuc.com/">www.resourceetuc.com/</a></p> <p><b>Contact Point:</b></p> <p>Ms Gabriela Portela ETUC Bd Roi Albert II, 5 B-1210 Brussels Tel: +32 2 219 27 98 Fax: +32 2 218 12 13 <a href="mailto:gportela@etuc.org">gportela@etuc.org</a></p>
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