

29 September 2012

EUROPEAN SOCIAL DIALOGUE

KEY MESSAGES

- 1 In the current economic context, the overarching priority is to create jobs in order to reduce unemployment.
- 2 European social partners should focus their activities on a limited number of key issues where they can add value to national labour market reforms.
- 3 The autonomy of European social partners must be respected.

WHAT DOES BUSINESSEUROPE AIM FOR?

- Over the last 20 years, social partners have demonstrated their capacity to find solutions to EU labour market problems and contribute to growth and employment (joint labour market analysis, agreements on part-time work, fixed-term contracts, inclusive labour markets etc.). We count on the European Commission to support and promote the European social dialogue.
- BUSINESSEUROPE values the EU social dialogue because:
 - It allows developing balanced EU social policies and to devise arrangements that better reflect both companies' and employees' needs than legislative initiatives.
 - It enables to build a shared understanding and mutual trust, which are essential prerequisites to modernise European labour markets.
- Results

The European Social Dialogue has produced significant achievements:

- **Four legally binding agreements implemented through EU directives** on parental leave (1995, revised in 2009), part-time work (1997), fixed-term work (1999);

KEY FACTS AND FIGURES

<p>Since the Treaty of Maastricht, the European Commission must consult social partners in two stages before proposing any EU initiative in the field of social affairs, in accordance with article 154-155 of the Treaty</p>	<p>The Lisbon Treaty added a new provision which recognises and promotes the role of social partners and officialises the Tripartite Social Summit (article 152 in the Lisbon treaty).</p>	<p>Since 1995, eight EU framework agreements (4 legally binding + 4 autonomous) have substituted EU social legislation</p>
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- **Four framework agreements implemented by social partners themselves:** telework (2002), work-related stress (2004), harassment and violence at the workplace (2007), inclusive labour markets (2010);
 - **Two frameworks of actions** on the lifelong development of competences (2002) and on gender equality (2005);
 - **A key Joint Labour Market Analysis** (2007) which paves the way to balanced reforms of labour markets and give a joint definition of flexicurity;
 - **A joint report on ECJ rulings** in the Viking, Laval, Ruffert and Luxembourg cases (see separate briefing) (2010);
 - **More than 50 joint declarations or joint opinions** dealing with issues as diverse as economic policy, labour market adaptability, restructuring, European works councils, education and training, the fight against racism, etc.
- Autonomous work programmes

Since 2003, European social partners work on the basis of multi annual programmes 2003-2005, 2006-2008, 2009-2010 (extended in 2011) and 2012-14.

In the context of the **current work programme 2012-14**, European social partners have agreed to take a series of actions:

- Negotiate a framework of actions on youth employment;
- Conduct an in-depth employment analysis;
- Look at two new issues in the context of the 2002 framework of actions on lifelong learning:
 - o skills' needs in greening economies and
 - o update and upgrade the skills of older workers in the context of longer working lives;
- Develop a toolkit building upon the implementation of the 2005 framework of actions on gender equality;
- Address mobility and economic migration;
- Launch a reflection on the consequences of the emerging European economic governance on social dialogue at EU and national levels;
- Run joint projects on capacity building, including in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean;
- Continue to ensure better impact and/or implementation of their joint texts and instruments.

For more information on EU social dialogue texts and instruments, please consult the Employers Resource Centre website:

<http://www.erc-online.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=511>

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