

18 April 2012

Informal EuroMed Roundtable

Background

- In the wake of the first two biennial meetings of employment Ministers of the Euro-Mediterranean region in 2008 and 2010, the Euro-Mediterranean social partners agreed to contribute positively to the process and to organise a regular social dialogue forum.
- A first EuroMed social dialogue forum took place in Barcelona in March 2010 and the next will be held later this year.
- As part of these forums, social partners share information on the state-of-play of the social dialogue in Euro-Mediterranean countries and exchange views on upcoming priorities.
- More recently, informal roundtables have been organised, notably to allow for exchanges between European social partners and social partners in countries that are experiencing the “Arab spring”.
- In the previous informal roundtable held in July 2011, BUSINESSEUROPE stressed its support for promoting social dialogue in Southern Mediterranean countries.
- In March 2012, European social partners adopted their fourth autonomous social dialogue work programme for 2012-2014 in which they indicated their willingness to consider joint action in the Euro-Mediterranean region.

State-of-play

- Several southern Mediterranean countries are currently at a crossroads regarding the establishment or adaptation of democratic institutions, including social dialogue structures.
- Trade unions and employer organisations in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia face difficulties in securing the right framework conditions for constructive social dialogue activities. There are still uncertainties on the side of governments and about the capacity of national institutions.
- Moreover, the situation differs greatly in those countries, with difficulties ranging from finances, membership, or recognition of appropriate tripartite or bipartite structures.



- Due to the diversity of national situations, the objective cannot be to promote the establishment of a supranational social dialogue as it has developed over the last twenty years on the European continent.
- Nevertheless, a better mutual understanding of industrial relations systems in the 43 countries of the Euro-Mediterranean region may allow national social partners to identify, select and apply the most effective ways to meet the challenges ahead.

Challenges ahead

- The most important challenge for social partners, governments and policy-makers across the Mediterranean region is to create jobs. Unemployment rates are high and have been persistent, in particular among young people.
- Addressing themes such as skills development, notably for young people, and migration, can help better meet the needs of employers and workers alike on both shores of the Mediterranean.
- BUSINESSEUROPE looks forward to continuing discussions between Euro-Mediterranean social partners on these issues in the context of the upcoming social dialogue forum.

Joint action on capacity-building

- Thanks to long experience with capacity-building, the European social partners have assisted many EU national social partner organisations in terms of structural, organisational and practical issues. We have conducted analysis and run workshops and seminars aimed at sharing information and best practices, providing concrete examples and insight for actors involved.
- BUSINESSEUROPE is ready to give its support to a project, if so requested by Southern Mediterranean social partners and taking into account capacity constraints, aiming to reinforce the capacity of social partners in the Southern shore of the Mediterranean.
- We would suggest that such a project focuses on the countries that are currently experiencing the adaptation of their institutions as a result of the 'Arab spring'.
- A precondition is that Southern Mediterranean social partners decide autonomously whether support from European social partners would add value to their work. If so, BUSINESSEUROPE would be eager to discuss what kind of support and assistance European social partners could provide. We also need to avoid overlaps with other ongoing initiatives.

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