



PROCEEDINGS

Textile and Clothing – Capacity-Building of Social Partners

in the Euro-Mediterranean Region

Euro-Mediterranean Workshop

24–25th November 2009

(Thon Hotel Brussels City Centre, Brussels/Belgium)

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Background

DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission in co-operation with TAIEX, Instrument of the Institution Building unit of the European Commission, organised a workshop on Textile and Clothing – Capacity Building of Social Partners in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The Euro-Mediterranean Workshop on Capacity Building took place within the framework of **the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue on the Future of the Textile and Clothing Sector**, which the Commission has been conducting with Mediterranean partner countries since 2004. One of the main objectives of the dialogue is to provide a platform for an exchange of experiences and information on ongoing initiatives and available instruments across the Euro-Mediterranean Region, in close co-operation with relevant stakeholders. The workshop took place on 24-25th November 2009 in Brussels and lasted a day and a half.

In line with the Dialogue's objective, this workshop aimed to contribute to an improved dialogue between social partners in the textile and clothing sector in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, in particular with respect to the management of structural changes and the adaptation to new market conditions. The workshop brought together representatives of **employers and employees – including industrial associations and trade unions** – of the textiles sector in Mediterranean partner countries and EU Member States.



Welcome

The workshop was opened with a welcome address and opening statements by **Mr Luis Filipe Girão** (Head of Unit, Textile, Fashion and Forest-based Industries at the Directorate General for Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission) and **Mr Jean Paul Tricart** (Head of Unit, Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations at the Directorate General for Employment of the European Commission), **Ms. Salima Admi** (Head of Division at the Ministry for Employment and Professional Training in Morocco), **Mr Francesco Marchi** (Director General of the European Apparel and Textile Association, EURATEX) and **Mr Patrick Itschert** (Secretary General of the European Trade Unions Federation: Textile, Clothing and Leather, ETUF:TCL).

In their opening statements, each of the speakers referred to the importance of the social dialogue between trade unions and employers associations, indicating examples of social dialogue promoted by the European Commission, Morocco and social partners. In his presentation, **Mr Jean Paul Tricart**, Head of Unit for Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations, presented the instruments and forms of EU Social Policy, with an emphasis on 37 sectoral social dialogue committees. Furthermore, he underlined financial, technical and institutional support given by the Commission to social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Region.

The presentation of Mr Jean Paul Tricart was followed by that of **Mr Luis Filipe Girão**, Head of Unit for Textiles, Fashion and Forest-based Industries, who addressed the important issues of the social dialogue from the point of view of competitiveness and EU Industrial Policy. He gave an overview of the development of textile and clothing sector in the European Union, concentrating, on the one hand, on existing technological challenges of the sectors and, on the other hand, on new challenges such as innovation and research, quality and fashion, as well as added value and qualifications.

Ms. Salima Admi, Head of Division at the Ministry of Employment and Professional Training in Morocco, emphasised the importance of good economic and social governance, active participation of social partners in the dialogue and good co-operation between employers and trade unions. She gave an overview of the textile and clothing sector in Morocco and various ways in which the Moroccan government aims to deal with economic and financial crises to revitalise the sector, by offering financial, commercial and social support to enterprises.

In their welcome speeches, **Mr Francesco Marchi**, Director General of the European Apparel and Textile Association (EURATEX), and **Mr Patrick Itschert**, Secretary General of the European Trade Unions Federation: Textile, Clothing and Leather (ETUF:TCL), referred to the importance of the social dialogue for both employers and employees, achievements of the joint co-operation between EURATEX and ETUF:TCL and challenges the textile and clothing sector is facing, in particular, the competition from China.

Parallel sessions

After the welcome session, the participants discussed issues related to the social dialogue in two separate sessions, one for the employers and one for the employees. The aims of the parallel sessions were, on the one hand, to compare experiences with social dialogues in various EU Member States and Mediterranean partner countries, and on the



other, to identify common interests in order to provide a framework for possible joint national social action plans. In particular, emphasis was put on the identification of their structures, specificities and possible gaps.

The employers' session was chaired by **Mr Jean-François Quix** from FEDUSTRIA (Belgium). In this, good practices and concrete examples of capacity-building were presented from Hungary (**Mr János Tomor**, HAMA), the Czech Republic (**Mr Jiri Kohoutek**, ATOK), Slovenia (**Mr Jose Smole**, GZS) and Turkey (**Mr Mehmet Kumbarac**, TGSD). Particular emphasis was put on: a new chapter in the history of national social dialogues after accession to the European Union (Hungary); support for collective bargaining at sectoral level and creating a platform for social dialogue with financial support from the EU Structural Funds (the Czech Republic); and the creation of a social agreement from various social partnerships, as well as challenges to the social dialogue which are associated with insufficient investment in research and development and inadequate legal solutions (Slovenia).

During the employees' session, chaired by **Mr Paul Gates** (United Kingdom), good practices from the following EU Member States were discussed: the Czech Republic (**Ms. Alena Narovcova**, OS-TOK); France (**Mr Bernard Moreau**, CGT THC); Hungary (**Mr Tamas Keleti**, TDSZ) and Slovenia (**Mr Anton Rozman**, STUPIS). Special attention was dedicated to challenges trade unions in the textile and clothing sector are facing, in particular, concerns related to the growing unemployment and the instability of the sector. Among other issues, speakers expressed the need to define a common strategy for sectoral dialogue and its practical implementation (Slovenia), activities oriented on real needs and fair policy, as well as enhancing the image of the sector (the Czech Republic).

The parallel sessions contributed to a lively debate about best practices and measures existing in EU Member States and in Mediterranean countries. In particular, the discussion concentrated on **successful examples of social dialogue** from new EU Member States that could be introduced into Mediterranean countries. The most important aspect indicated both by representatives of employers' associations and trades union was the **promotion of good practice** of social dialogue, highlighting the benefits of capacity-building for social actors on both sides. The participants also indicated the importance of promotion of not only horizontal – South-South and North-North – co-operation but also that emphasis should be put on **North-South co-operation**.

During the parallel session, the following aspects were discussed in more detail: the problems associated with unfair competition, the need for sectoral agreements, the need to improve the image of the textile and clothing sector in order to demonstrate that the sector is withstanding the economic crisis. At the same time, some **obstacles to social dialogue** in Mediterranean countries were highlighted. For instance, in Morocco not all enterprises are represented by the Moroccan Association of the Textile and Clothing Industries (*l'Association marocaine des industries du textile et de l'habillement*, AMITH) as not all trades union are represented by the General Union of Moroccan Workers (*l'Union générale des travailleurs du Maroc*, UGTM). Due to the partial representation, only the interests of selected employers and trade unions are represented in the social dialogue between employers and trade unions in the textile and clothing sector.

In the employers' session, suggestions were made to convince public authorities to develop **measures to stimulate the industry** and to introduce a guide for public authorities in order to set social and environmental criteria. Overall, the need for social



partners and governments to work together to enhance the textile and clothing sector was underlined. During the discussion in the employees' session, it was emphasised that employers and employees in the Euro-Mediterranean Region are not competitors, so they should co-operate with each other in order to be able to compete with other regions, in particular with China and India. Moreover, it was suggested that the relations between buyers and producers should be strengthened in the region.

First day - afternoon session

In the afternoon session chaired by **Mr Patrick Itschert** (ETUF:TCL), the discussion evolved around presentation of the best practices existing at EU and international levels in the sectoral social dialogues. Firstly, benefits derived from the social dialogue in Belgium were presented by **Mr Dirk Uyttenhove** (CSC Textura) and **Mr Jean-François Quix**, (FEDUSTRIA), representing respectively the employees and employer's points of view. In their presentations, they highlighted the issues related to the composition and objectives of sectoral committees as well as the importance of finance, training and education. As a comparison with social dialogue in Belgium, a case study of Lithuania was presented by **Ms. Jovita Meskauskiene** (Lithuanian Trade Union of Industry Enterprises) and **Mr Gediminas Viskelis** (Lithuanian Apparel and Textile industry Association, LATIA). The main emphasis of their presentation was put on the shift from a lack of social dialogue before 1990 towards the establishment of co-operation between social partners. In particular, they highlighted actions taken at the enterprise, sectoral, national and EU levels.

The EU case studies were followed by presenting a best practice in the social dialogue in a Mediterranean country on the example of Morocco. This presentation, by **Mr Abdellah Hassiane** (UGTM) and **Mr Abdelhai Bessa** (AMITH), evolved around the introduction at the social level of the programme "Fibre Citoyenne", which serves as both a national code of conduct and as a labelling initiative. The "Fibre Citoyenne" programme puts emphasis on the social responsibility of enterprises concentrating on: social dialogue; the gender dimension; legal compliance; as well as the development of competences co-financed by public funds.

After the discussion of the case studies, on behalf of the International Labour Organization (ILO), **Ms. Corine Vargha**, presented "Social Dialogue and Core Labour Standards". She focused on the experience of ILO technical co-operation in textile and clothing sector indicating success factors and challenges. Among success factors she pointed out the compliance with core labour standards, mutual respect, high levels of trust, willingness to share power and influence as well as information-sharing and consultation. However, she also indicated that social dialogue faces a number of challenges, such as weak employers' and workers' organisations, weak labour administrations, and insufficient institutional, political and legal capacities.

Day two

The session on day two, chaired by **Mr Luis Filipe Girão** (European Commission), started with a summary of the previous day, followed by the identification of key elements for a better social dialogue. **Mr Francesco Marchi** (EURATEX) presented the situation of the textile and clothing industry in the EU 27, drawing particular attention to the impact of the economic and financial crises. As the main features of the crises affecting the sector, he



listed falling demand due to the weak internal market, falling export markets and severe credit crunches. At the same time, he proposed some recommendations for managing change, such as improving the image of the sector, promoting innovation and training, developing employability, building a quality social dialogue and applying an integrated approach in the sector.

This was followed by the presentation on Corporate Social Responsibility by **Mr Isidor Boix** (FITEQA-CC.OO, Spain), looking at environmental and social issues, including the development of codes of conduct. In his speech, he highlighted positive experiences with Corporate Social Responsibility in Spain, indicating other examples of best practice around the world. Moreover, he stressed the need to introduce new instruments for Corporate Social Responsibility at the EU level in order to increase its efficiency and transparency.

Mr Jerzy Garczy•ski (PIOT GDYNIA, Poland) explained why it is important to improve the image of the sector. He pointed out that a better image can not only attract investment and enhance credibility of textile and clothing companies - which facilitates their access to credits, but it can also attract young people to the textile and clothing industry. Among the proposals to improve the image of the sector, he listed: the inclusion of the textile and clothing sector into national programmes of industrial strategy; the promotion of attractiveness and innovation of the sector to a wider public; and the presentation of a new image of the sector. He then highlighted some challenges to the image of the sector, such as false claims about the composition of textile products.

Ms. Salima Admi (Ministry of Employment and Professional Training, Morocco) gave a presentation on adapting to social compliance in Morocco, concentrating on a participative, adaptive and consensual approach. She explained the importance of social compliance by pointing out economic, national and international requirements, such as the respect of international norms and the national Labour Code. In fact, she pointed out that the National Action Plan on Adapting to Social Compliance in Morocco is characterised by the partnership approach based on involving various stakeholders. Ms. Salima Admi highlighted the implementation of the National Action Plan, its criteria of evaluation and its mid-term results.

Joint discussion session

The presentations led to a **lively debate** on next steps to be taken in order to contribute to better capacity-building and the adoption of joint sectoral national action plans in the Euro-Mediterranean countries. During the ensuing discussion, the **following points were stressed**:

- It was widely agreed that there is a need for **setting a framework for social dialogue** and conflict management at the sectoral level, which would enable not only negotiations on collective agreement but also the development of country-specific systems for finding solutions.
- All speakers emphasised **the role of economic and financial crisis** as an important barrier to social dialogue. In particular, the lack of funds emerged as a significant obstacle for capacity-building of the social partners. At the same time, participants from the Mediterranean Region expressed their interest in financial support from the



European Union in order to develop their social dialogues in the textile and clothing sector.

- Generally all participants called for closer co-operation, and in particular for **the enhancement of the North-South co-operation**. Such co-operation would not only facilitate learning from each other through the exchange of good practices and the transfer of experiences, but also would create innovative solutions for capacity-building of the social partners (e.g. training). The importance of the sharing best practices, knowledge and experience transfer was emphasised. In particular, it would be important to compare how the social dialogues have been evolving in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, what progress has been made so far. In addition, new EU Member States have often been cited as examples of best practice since, with the EU accession, they grasped the opportunity to develop their social dialogues as no one had expected.
- In the promotion of the textile and clothing sector in the Euro-Mediterranean Region, participants often stressed the importance of **the approach based on 3Fs** (Fashion, Flexible and Fast), which is supposed to enhance the added value of the sector.

Proposals (next steps)

During the discussion on social dialogues, several proposals were made to stimulate the co-operation in the area of capacity-building of social partners in the Euro-Mediterranean Region:

- All the participants called for the **organisation – on an annual basis – of a similar type of event** as the workshop on the capacity-building of the social partners in order to examine how the sectoral social dialogue is developing in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. In particular, it was suggested to **introduce action plans** in all countries to study not only the progress of the social dialogue but also the impact of changes in the economy and trade on the social dialogue in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. In the action plans on social dialogue the following elements should be emphasised: **representativeness, competitiveness and inclusiveness** (Représentativité, compétitivité et globalité)
- Participants suggested introducing **a newsletter** on a monthly basis and **a web-page** dedicated to the capacity-building of social partners in the textile and clothing sector in the Euro-Mediterranean Region. The web-page would gather experiences in the development of social dialogue in the region, highlighting best practices in both EU member states and Mediterranean partner countries. The newsletter, issued on a monthly basis, would provide information on the development of the social dialogues and the recent changes in the region, which would allow for the up-to-date sharing of experiences between EU and Mediterranean countries.

Closing of the workshop

The workshop was closed by **Mr Luis Filipe Girão** (DG Enterprise and Industry of the European Commission), **Ms. Rim Oumalek** (Ministry of Industry and Trade in Morocco), **Mr Francesco Marchi** (EURATEX) and **Mr Patrick Itschert** (ETUF:TCL). In the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Dialogue on the Future of the Textile and Clothing sector, new initiatives will be assessed on the basis of the outcome of this



workshop. The tools and instruments on capacity-building of social partners presented at the plenary are horizontal which means that they are accessible to all sectors, textiles and clothing included. The European Commission services and other public authorities will set the framework, organise events and provide tools but launching concrete projects will be up to the social partners, i.e. employers and trades union of the textile and clothing sector.

Contact information

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