Sectoral Social Dialogue

Key messages

1. **Consensus-based:** Sectoral social dialogue helps achieve consensus on important issues of mutual interest at EU level. It cannot resolve contentious issues, but can build trust and understanding as well as delivering joint initiatives on specific problems.

2. **Voluntary:** The dialogue has been ongoing nearly 30 years and has evolved as a voluntary framework for cooperation. The voluntary nature of European social dialogue is essential, as it is only through the careful building of trust that consensus, rather than conflict, can be found. The European Social Dialogue, therefore does not lend itself to binding agreements.

3. **Autonomous:** The self-governing nature of each of the social partners, as well as of the partnership, is essential. Therefore, it needs to be respected by both national governments and the Commission.

4. **Objectives:** The social dialogue aims at ensuring the development, competitiveness and productivity of the retail and wholesale sector. EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa work together to promote jobs and careers in the sector, which is undergoing major change, not least in the face of developments in the digital economy. EU social dialogue helps to develop balanced European social policies and builds a common understanding and mutual trust essential to a better functioning European retail and wholesale labour market.
Background

There has been an effective social dialogue between EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa Commerce since 1983 and it was officially recognised by the European Commission in 1990. Three years later, EuroCommerce and Euro-Fiet (now UNI-Europa) officially recognised each other as social partners within the meaning of Articles 3 and 4 of the Agreement on Social Policy. In November 1998, following the Commission Decision to formalising the European sectoral social dialogue, the social partners agreed to establish a committee.

The main objectives of EuroCommerce’s participation in the European social dialogue are to work with UNI-Europa to ensure our sector develops competitively and to promote jobs and careers in the sector. In the face of developments in the digital economy, the social partners are currently discussing a joint statement on this topic. As part of this, EuroCommerce is committed to working to increase the skills and employability of the workforce and to encourage and support businesses and their workforces to adapt to the changing commercial, social and technical environment in which they trade.

The work programme for the sectoral dialogue for 2016-2017 focuses on the following issues:

1. Adaptation to change, vocational training and skill needs
2. EU Employment Strategy and the retail and wholesale sector
3. Joint follow-up of EU policies with a social impact on retail and wholesale
4. Health, safety and well-being at the workplace
5. Improving the effectiveness of social dialogue

Further information

- EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa (2016): Addressing physical and psychosocial risks in the retail and wholesale sector: Joint project report on best practice
- EuroCommerce, UNI-Europa, CoESS, European Federation of Cleaning Industries, Insurance Europe, EBF, Coiffure EU, EuroCiett (2016): Joint statement - Shaping the future of the services industry: the all-important role of social partners
- EuroCommerce and UNI-Europa (2015): Joint pledge on apprenticeships
- European Commission website – Social Dialogue
- European Commission website – Social Dialogue texts database

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