

ARITAKE-WILD

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations

"CEEC Social Partners' Participation in the European Social Dialogue:

..... what are the social partner's needs?"

PHASE TWO - FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS

Report of the Hungarian National Seminar

MGYOSZ premises, Budapest
Hungary

4th October 2005

Prepared by ARITAKE-WILD
October 2005

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Introduction

The third in a series of follow-up national seminars¹ designed to maximise the effectiveness of the participation of the new EU member states in European Social Dialogue was held in Hungary on 4th October 2005. The objectives of the seminar were to:

- Review progress on the implementation of the action plans developed during phase one of the project;
- Identify and discuss any problems that had been encountered and propose ways to resolve them;
- Identify future “individual organisation” and “joint” priority actions for the Hungarian social partners.

The seminar was attended by representatives from 4 Hungarian employers' organisations and 4 Hungarian trade unions. Also in attendance were representatives from the European social partners UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC; and experts. The full attendance list for the seminar is attached as appendix one.

Methodology

The seminar methodology built upon that used during the eight “two-day” CEEC national seminars. The one-day meeting format was designed with the objective of assuring maximum participation of the Hungarian trade union and employer representatives. The contribution of the participants from the European social partner organisations and the experts was designed to promote focussed debate; to facilitate problem identification and resolution; and encourage action plan development. Detailed discussions were held in small working groups. Plenary feedback and review sessions involving all attendees were used to identify priorities and build consensus around actions. To further facilitate

¹ The first five seminars belonged to a pilot project of 5 new Member States (Czech Republic, Hungary, Lithuania, Poland and Slovakia). The pilot project was then expanded to include Estonia, Latvia and Slovenia.

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the generation and discussion of ideas and the development of future strategies, the seminar was conducted to the maximum extent possible in the Hungarian language.

The seminar opened with formal presentations from the Hungarian social partner organisations that summarised the actions they had taken to implement their “phase one” project actions. The seminar closed with the social partner organisations agreeing a revised series of “effectiveness improvement” actions to be implemented over the short to medium term. Between these sessions were working group discussions, plenary debate and a variety of formal and informal inputs from the European social partners

This report follows the format of the seminar agenda. It provides an overview report of each of the working sessions, and contains a schedule of agreed actions developed at the meeting. The detailed agenda for the meeting is included as appendix two but the working sessions making up the seminar can be summarised as follows:

Overview agenda		
Session one	Presentations by the national social partners	“Implementation of the phase one action plans.”
Session two	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future.”
Session three	Working group discussion and feedback	“Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities.”
Session four	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners.”
Session five	Concluding discussion	“Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues.”

Report of the meeting

Session one - "Implementation of the phase one action plans."

The phase one action plan of the Hungarian trade unions included two points for action as follows;

Hungarian trade union "phase one" action plan

1. Trade union coordination:

A process needs to be established to facilitate the coordination of trade union views on European issues based on either the OET or a new umbrella structure. A working group will be established to develop concrete proposals that will be presented for decision to each of the trade unions involved.

2. Language:

In the short term, an audit will be undertaken to establish existing language competencies in the various professional disciplines needed for effective engagement in the European Social Dialogue. In the longer term, recruitment opportunities must be used to bring people with both language and technical skills into the trade unions. It was recognised that there will be a trade off between language skills, expertise in technical issues and negotiating competencies. This will need to be addressed through additional training.

To date the Hungarian trade unions have undertaken the following initiatives to implement their action commitments:

- ◇ A working group within the National Industry Conciliation Council (OET) now provides information and support to assist in preparations for meetings;
- ◇ The development of an electronic link to speed up information flows is currently under discussion;
- ◇ Several sources of funding for language courses (primarily through ETUC) have been identified and used.

In addition to the initiatives taken to support the action plan, the Hungarian trade unions reported that they have made significant progress in the area of sectoral social dialogue and it is hoped that this will feed into, and support, the further development of national and EU level social dialogue;

In undertaking these actions, the trade unions noted the following constraints:

- ◇ Due to the multi-union nature of trade union organisation in Hungary, it has not been possible to establish “umbrella” or “coordinating” arrangements.
- ◇ Although progress has been made on language capabilities, the mismatch of language and technical skills continues to be a significant problem.

The phase one action plan of the Hungarian employers’ organisations included two points for action as follows;

Hungarian employers’ organisation “phase one” action plan

1. Information flows:

A more formal and reliable system needs to be established to assure a better information flow on European social dialogue issues.

2. Language:

Steps need to be put in place to identify technical experts with the language skills necessary to effectively represent employers in the European Social Dialogue.

To date the Hungarian employers’ organisations have undertaken the following initiatives to implement their action commitments:

- ◇ New mechanisms for coordination of employer views on EU issues have been put in place based around the full membership in UNICE of MGYOSZ. These arrangements are however relatively new and need time to settle;

In undertaking this action, the employers’ organisations noted the following constraints:

- ◇ While progress has been made on coordinating Hungarian employers’ activities it was noted that representing the interests of large, medium and small enterprises across a variety of employers’ organisations remains very challenging.
- ◇ It has proved difficult to take issues forward where joint social partner actions were required. Better informal relationships and contacts do not appear to substitute adequately for more formal mechanisms.

Session two - "The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future."

Valeria Ronzitti (CEEP) made a formal presentation offering a brief outline of the history and evolution of European social dialogue; a description of the current social dialogue work programme; and an indication of probable future priorities. Her full presentation is included as appendix three.

*Session three – Working group discussions and feedback
"Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities."*

The national representatives were divided into three working groups: A "trade union group"; an "employers' organisation group" and a "joint group" of trade union and employers' organisation participants. Representatives from UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP joined the employers' organisation group; two representatives from the ETUC together with one expert joined the trade union group; and representatives from ETUC, CEEP and UNICE, together with one expert, joined the "joint group". A chairperson/rapporteur was selected by each group from amongst the national participants.

The working groups were given 90 minutes to consider the following questions:

In the light of the plenary presentations - what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?

Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national/European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and the next 3 years?

The report back from the three groups covered the following issues;

Trade union group

- The need for better coordination on European issues needs to be further promoted at national and sectoral levels;
- A joint expert base to support the Hungarian social partners needs to be established;
- Further improvements need to be made in language capabilities, focussing in particular on "specialised" EU and social dialogue related language skills;
- Joint training in communication, "compromise based" negotiation and aimed at trust building would benefit the national social partners;
- Studies should be carried out into, and lessons learned from, the Hungarian experience of implementing framework agreements;

- Discussions should be organised with the Hungarian employers' organisations to discuss shared priorities. The agenda is open to discussion, but could for example include: ageing, undeclared work, stress (linked to equal opportunities), youth employment and lifelong learning.

Employers' Organisation Group

- The development of common Hungarian employer positions that can be taken to the EU level remains an important challenge. Employers need to refine their coordination mechanisms to become more efficient;
- National bilateral discussions need to be promoted to avoid repetition of the telework experience where compliance has been achieved through national legislation;
- Information exchanges relating to the clearer communication of national needs and concerns to the EU level, and of EU issues to the national level, need to be improved;
- Concentrate further on the development of networks and capitalise more on less formal contacts and relationships.

Joint Group

- The Hungarian social partners need to create a forum for effective bipartite social dialogue. Issues: like temporary work; youth and unemployment and corporate social responsibility could be on the agenda;
- Young people's interest and participation in EU issues should be encouraged through a virtual training facility;
- Promote more public awareness of both national and EU level social dialogue through the development of a joint institute for information relating to social dialogue.

Session four - "Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners."

In response to questions and needs expressed by the national social partners during the 2004 phase of the project the European level social partners have undertaken a range of activities to improve the effectiveness of the participation of new member states in the European social dialogue. Jeanne Schmitt of UNICE and Szilvia Borbély of ETUC made presentations covering each of the following subjects;

- Resource centres – the European level social partners have established employer and trade union resource centres and launched web sites to promote their new services;

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- Training and development assistance – assistance is available from the European social partners to facilitate staff development initiatives e.g. through the funding of additional places at European level meetings for developmental purposes;
- Social partner competence development – a process by which individuals and organisations can “self assess” against a series of “effective European social partner” competencies is almost ready for circulation.

The full presentations are included as appendices four and five.

The experts and European level social partners then commented on what they considered to be the most important issues and priorities for the Hungarian social partners to consider. Their comments were as follows;

- Maximum advantage should be taken from the support that the EU social partners are offering at the moment. At this time the funding is available and the activities are possible ... but it may not always be that way.
- European social dialogue has come a long way, which is something to be proud of. To improve further the Hungarian social partners must consolidate their efforts and work to create the space where they can act autonomously. The EU level social partners can help with this issue.
- An important point for early consideration to improve coordination within and between the social partner organisations might be to explore further the possibilities for more and better informal meetings. The work programme of the EU social partners can be used to provide an agenda for both formal and informal discussions.
- EU level social dialogue is not an option, it is an obligation. The decision at national level is how to organise to assure the effectiveness of the national social partner contribution to the process.
- The obligation of all social partners is to their members and the promotion of their interests at sectoral, national and EU level. Improved effectiveness at the EU level offers the opportunity to shape important decisions that impact significantly on both member companies and workers. This is an opportunity that can be taken or lost.
- An important challenge is to identify and focus on the most important issues. In the absence of priorities and focus there is a risk of being overwhelmed.

A “tour de table” was then conducted at which each national participant was asked to consider, in the light of the presentations made throughout the day, what they thought to be the most important issues to have emerged from the discussion. The following list of issues does not reflect any priority order or “multiple” mentions of issues. It simply indicates the issues raised and the order in which they were raised.

- The Hungarian social partners were disappointed to have made less progress than many of the other new member states in this area.
- There is a need to create a bipartite forum;
- Public awareness of the importance of social dialogue at both national and European level is an issue;
- Unite within the employer and trade union groups – together a better pool of expertise is available;
- Change style and become less confrontational. At the EU level, negotiations don't stop because of individual disagreements – Hungarian social partners need to learn from this;
- Encourage all three levels of social dialogue; sectoral, national and EU levels;
- Set priorities and apply focussed effort;
- Develop language skills;
- Consider joint training of national social partners in “compromise based” negotiation;
- Stop relying on the government to provide solutions;
- The issue is not necessarily to reduce the number of TU or Employers’ organisations. The immediate requirement is to work from today’s point of departure and find areas of common interest and priority;
- The gaps between sectoral, national and EU level social dialogue need to be bridged;
- Face the fact that EU social dialogue is not an option.

Session five - “Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues.”

Following the tour de table the working group reports were discussed in the context of the inputs during the day and it was agreed that the phase one action plans could be reviewed and updated in the light of experience to date. It was concluded that the same areas for improvement applied equally to both sets of social partners individually and to the trade unions and employers working collectively. The actions listed below were considered to be both focused and achievable.

Hungarian Action Plan

- 1. Create a bipartite forum for discussion. This could be either formal or informal;*
- 2. Work harder to improve internal and inter-organisational coordination;*
- 3. Continue to focus on the development of language skills;*
- 4. Create a database of available experts;*
- 5. Improve information exchange and information flows;*
- 6. Study, and learn lessons from, the implementation of framework agreements.*

At the end of the meeting, thanks were offered to all those involved in the preparation and conduct of the seminar.

List of Appendices

Appendix one	Seminar attendance list
Appendix two	Seminar agenda
Appendix three	European Social Dialogue: Agenda and Priorities for the Future
Appendix four	European Social Dialogue: Employer's Support Tools
Appendix five	European Social Dialogue: Trade Union Support Tools
Appendix six	Agreed Action Plan from the Hungarian Follow-Up Seminar 2005

APPENDIX TWO

AGENDA

Joint Seminars of the European Social Partner Organisations "CEEC social participation in the European social dialogue: What are the social partners' needs?"

National Seminar HUNGARY
 Venue: MGYOSZ Premises, Budapest
 Date: Tuesday 4 OCTOBER 2005

0900 – 0930	Welcome, introductions and purpose of the day	A Wild in plenary
0930 - 1045	Pre-prepared presentations from the national trade unions, national employers and a national joint presentation; "Report on the implementation of the action plan – the presentations should include what went well, what proved difficult, what we were unable to implement and why?"	Plenary session
1045 - 1100	Coffee Break	
1100 - 1145	European level social partner presentation on the likely European Social Dialogue agenda and priorities for the future	Plenary session
1145 - 1150	Briefing of working groups (employers, trade unions and joint)	A Wild in plenary
1150 - 1315	Three groups work on the questions: "In the light of the plenary presentations – what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?" "Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national / European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and in the next three years?"	Three working groups
1315 - 1445	Lunch Break	
1445 - 1530	Presentations from the working groups and questions on the proposed actions	Plenary session
1530 - 1615	Presentation by the EU social partners on the employers and trade union "support tools" and questions: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. resource centres 2. training sessions 3. competence development project 	Plenary session
1615 – 1630	Coffee Break	
1630 – 1715	General discussion on the possible content / priorities of future action plans following the presentations from working groups and the EU social partners	Plenary session
1715 – 1800	Consensus building session and agreement on the key issues and specific actions to be taken by trade unions and employers individually and jointly in the next 12 months and in the next three years	Plenary session
1800	closing remarks	Plenary session

APPENDIX SIX

AGREED ACTION PLAN FROM THE HUNGARIAN FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

<p style="text-align: center;">Hungarian Social Partner Action Plan</p> <p style="text-align: center;">To be implemented by trade unions and employers' organisations individually and jointly</p>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Create a bipartite forum for discussion. This could be either formal or informal;2. Work harder to improve internal and inter-organisational coordination;3. Continue to focus on the development of language skills;4. Create a database of available experts;5. Improve information exchange and information flows;6. Study, and learn lessons from, the implementation of framework agreements.