

Joint Seminars of the European Social Partner Organisations

“Social partners’ participation in the  
European social dialogue

*... what are the social partner’s needs? ”*

Phase 2 – Follow-up seminars

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Report of the Turkish National Seminar

Sheraton Hotel and Convention Centre, Ankara  
Turkey

3<sup>rd</sup> February 2009

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Prepared by ARITAKE-WILD  
February 2009



Project of the European Social Partners with the financial support of the European Commission

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### *Introduction*

As a part of the European Social Partners work programme 2006 – 2008, the follow up meeting of the 2007 seminar designed to enable the national social partner organisations in candidate countries (Croatia and Turkey) and New Member States (Bulgaria and Romania) to improve their capacity for current or future involvement in the European social dialogue was held in Ankara, Turkey on 3 February 2009. The programme builds on similar work undertaken in the New Member States in eight Central and Easter European countries as a part of the social partners work programme 2003 – 2005<sup>1</sup>,

The objectives for the Turkish social partners during this one- day event 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 organization” and “joint” priority actions for the Turkish social partners.

The seminar was attended by representatives of the Turkish employers' organisations (15 participants of TISK, TUSIAD, TESK and TKIB) and trade unions (18 participants of DISK and HAK-IS); representatives from the European social partners (BUSINESSEUROPE, ETUC, UEAPME and CEEP) and experts. The full attendance list for the seminar is attached to this report as appendix one.

### *Methodology*

The seminar methodology was designed to assure maximum participation of the Turkish trade unions and employers with “added value” input from the participants from the

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<sup>1</sup> As part of the European social partner work programme 2003 – 2005, initial and follow-up seminars were held in the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia between January 2005 and May 2006. Reports of the 16 national seminars and synthesis reports from the two sub projects can be found on the resource centre websites of the European social partner organizations (<http://resourcecentre.etuc.org/> for trade unions and <http://www.erc-online.eu> for employers).

European social partner organisations and the experts. A significant part of the event involved discussions in working groups followed by a plenary feedback. The event ended with a consensus building session. To further facilitate generation and development of ideas and strategies, the working groups were conducted in the Turkish language with “non-intrusive” interpretation available to the European social partner participants and experts. Full simultaneous interpretation was provided in the plenary sessions. In order to maximise bipartite discussion and the development of action priorities, discussions were held in three working groups: one contained exclusively trade union representatives; the second contained exclusively employers’ organisation representatives; and the third group was of “mixed” composition. The outputs of all three groups were presented and discussed in plenary.

This report follows the format of the seminar agenda, providing an overview report of each of the seven working sessions that made up the seminar. The detailed agenda for the meeting is included as appendix two, but the seven working sessions making up the seminar can be summarised as follows:

	<b>Outline session content</b>	<b>Nature of the session</b>
Session one	Welcome, introduction and purpose of the day	Expert input, EU social partners - plenary
Session two	“Report on the implementation of the action plan – what went well, what proved difficult, what we were unable to implement and why?” – presentations from the national trade unions, national employers and a national joint presentation	National social partners input - plenary
Session three	European level social partner presentation on the European Social Dialogue agenda and plans for the future	EU social partners - plenary
Session four	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 organizational and national / European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and in the next three years?”	National social partners – three working groups
Session five	Working group feedback on the proposed actions	National social partners - plenary
Session six	Review of tools offered by European social partners - What has been most and least useful? - What could be done in the future?	EU social partners followed by plenary discussion
Session seven	General discussion on the possible content/priorities of future action plans and final remarks from the EU social partners	Consensus building session – plenary

## *Report of the meeting*

### **Session one (Expert input) – Welcome and introduction of the purpose of the seminar**

Alan Wild welcomed the participants and introduced the purpose of the seminar. He reminded participants that two years ago they had discussed how to improve cooperation between the national social partners, fast track engagement of the Turkish social partners in the EU level social dialogue and defined some priority activities and actions. This meeting was to review progress against priorities, to indicate the areas of success and the areas for further improvement as well as to define plans for further development. Its goal was also to offer an update on future plans for the development of the EU level social dialogue and an assessment of the usefulness of tools offered by the EU level social partner organizations to their Turkish counterparts.

After the round of introductions of participants, the chairman recalled the issues discussed two years ago which he summarized as follows:

- ✧ Strengthening the resources available to the social partner organisations;
- ✧ Improving bipartite social dialogue in Turkey at all levels;
- ✧ Ensuring appropriate space and priority for effective social dialogue in relations with the government;
- ✧ Bringing more women and young people to the formal labour market.

### **Session two (National social partners input) - “Report on the implementation of the action plan – what went well, what proved difficult, what we were unable to implement and why?”**

Presentations from the employers’ organisations, trade unions and the social partners jointly followed the introductory session.

The employers’ presentation recalled the action plan from the phase one seminar which included the following initiatives:

- ✧ Strengthening the organizational capacity - this had been carried out by adopting a more effective approach to disseminating documents among the national employers’ organizations affiliated to the EU level social partners’ organizations and by promoting bilateral social dialogue;
- ✧ Ensuring better use of the EU funds - progress had been made in developing training programs and implementing a variety of joint projects. Examples include training programmes within the framework of the Leonardo da Vinci programme and the TEKSTIL project in the textile sector;
- ✧ Better harnessing talents of young people and increasing the level of participation of women on the labour market – which constitutes an integral part of the recently proposed Employment Package.

The trade union presentation briefly recalled the history of relations between employers' organizations and trade unions and the legal basis for social dialogue in Turkey. It was suggested that the biggest challenge facing the social partners was the absence of a culture of social dialogue and the dominant role played by government in the social dialogue process. Agreeing with the employers, the trade unions suggested that EU sponsored projects provided opportunities for joint work between employers and trade union representatives. The success of a variety of joint initiatives in the past two years offered some grounds for optimism for the future. Nonetheless, it was suggested that the immediate future of social dialogue was threatened by the spectre of collective dismissals due to the fragile political and economic situation.

In the joint presentation, two main points were underlined. The first related to the strengthening of certain labour market institutions and the second was the use made of EU pre-accession funds. Professional Vocational Committees had been established alongside training and skills certification centers (the Europass Center). The availability of EU funds has had a major influence on improving the resources available to social partner organizations. A substantial lifelong learning support project will be carried out over the period 2008-2013 by the Turkish social partners, financed by EU funds. There are other joint projects that are to be implemented including projects aimed at fighting illegal employment; promotion of employment for women; and social inclusion (notably for people with disabilities) which form an important element of the social partners' agenda.

A trade union participant in the seminar suggested that the generally positive picture being painted was not uniform to all sectors and the glass sector was one where social dialogue remained very limited.

**Session three (EU social partners input) – the European social partners' presentation on the European Social Dialogue agenda and plans for the future**

Valeria Ronzitti of CEEP, Steven d'Haeseleer of BUSINESSEUROPE, Cinzia Sechi of ETUC and Liliane Volozinskis of UEAPME presented the achievements of social dialogue at the European level and the future European social partners' agenda. Their presentation is attached to this report as appendix three.

**Session four (Working groups) - "Learning points for the development of the future action plans and action plan for the next 12 months and 3 years"**

The national representatives were divided into three working groups: a "trade union group", an "employers' organisation group" and a "joint group". Representatives from BUSINESSEUROPE and UEAPME joined the employers' organisation group; the representative from the ETUC and one expert joined the trade union group and representatives from CEEP and BUSINESSEUROPE and one expert joined the joint group. 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?

- ✧ What do we need to do to further develop social dialogue in the next 12 months and over a three year horizon? What are the priorities that need to be addressed, especially taking into consideration the present economic and political situation?

### **Session five (Working group feedback) – Reflecting on lessons learnt and future activities**

After lunch the participants met again in plenary session to report back from their working groups. The feedback from the three groups can be summarised as follows (the group views are presented in the order they were delivered);

#### **Employers' Organisation Group**

- ✧ Steps have been taken to ensure better internal communication within and between employer's organizations through the use of information technology. In the last two years there have been more meetings and seminars organized involving employer social partners;
- ✧ The priorities for Turkey and Europe are changing with notably the reduction of bureaucracy and red tape on labour law and better industrial relations in relation to the public sector. In the coming 12 months the Turkish employers should identify and work together on a limited number of important priorities;
- ✧ Over the next three years the Turkish employers should work to turn the current crisis into an opportunity for the economy. This can be done by changing labour legislation to promote employment growth, dealing with illegal employment, promoting flexibility in employment and ensuring participation of young people and women in the labour market. At the same time the level of government intervention in labour market activities should be reduced;

#### **Trade Union Group**

The trade unions emphasised the following points;

- ✧ The effectiveness of tripartite social dialogue needs to be improved;
- ✧ Vocational training for employment is one of the most important current issues;
- ✧ Sectoral social dialogue and sector councils should be established culminating in sector level agreements;
- ✧ Employers' organizations and trade unions should be organized in a similar way in order to assure a match of social partners at all levels. At present trade unions and employers organizations are structured differently as a result of current regulations;
- ✧ Tripartite agreements should be concluded on issues like parental leave, gender equality and equality issues in general (age, religion, etc). The employment of women and young people should be both promoted and regulated. Another key priority is combating illegal employment;
- ✧ The most important issues need to be defined and agreed followed by the design and delivery of programmes and projects;

## Joint Group

- ✧ Joint initiatives should be aimed at solving practical problems;
- ✧ It is necessary to shape industrial relations in Turkey through joint engagement in different projects. Good practices emerging from projects should be shared amongst the national social partners' organizations' members. It is also important to benefit from lessons learned from less successful initiatives;
- ✧ Social dialogue should be encouraged at the sectoral level – issues like occupational health and safety as well as vocational training could be discussed at this level;
- ✧ Regular evaluation of the efficiency of social dialogue functioning should take place in order to identify areas for further improvement;
- ✧ Steps need to be taken to fight the informal market and to remove obstacles to the further development of the formal labour market. Ways need to be found to find a role for micro enterprises in the social dialogue process;
- ✧ In the context of the financial crisis, protection of companies and employment and the development of the labour market are key topics on the agenda;
- ✧ Bipartite social dialogue is quite effective and brings good results, however both bipartite and tripartite social dialogue should be further enhanced. This is a shared responsibility of both social partners and the government.

After this intervention, the chairman observed that there were similarities in the proposed action plans related. These included:

- ✧ Further improving relationships between employers' organizations and trade unions at all levels;
- ✧ Combating illegal employment;
- ✧ Organizing programmes for vocational training and lifelong learning;
- ✧ Strengthening tripartite social dialogue;
- ✧ Finding effective mechanisms for incorporating views of the employers and workers from micro enterprise in the social dialogue process;
- ✧ Learning from experience of both successes and failures to develop consistently better practices;
- ✧ The social partners agree that involvement in good and constructive discussions is important not only in prosperous times, but equally in more difficult times;
- ✧ Introducing appropriate legal regulations to support social dialogue was discussed two years ago and this is still an issue. There is a renewed commitment to progress this issue;

In the ensuing discussion it was pointed out that Turkey should not be compared with other candidate countries or new member states as it had been the market economy for a long time and the mechanisms of representing employers and trade unions were well established. The present challenge was more restoring the former dynamic of strong and representative

social partners committed to making things that had deteriorated over the time work again. In this context it was suggested that in view of the full membership of the EU negotiations of Chapter XIX on social affairs and employment should restart because they are crucial to the development of the labour movement and promotion of social dialogue and collective bargaining.

**Session six (Expert input)** - *“Review of tools offered by the European social partners: What has been most and least useful? What could be done in the future?” - EU social partners presentation*

The European social partners reviewed the tools offered to their member organizations. Matthew Higham of BUSINESSEUROPE invited the Turkish social partners to reflect on what could be useful in the future in helping them achieve their objectives. Cinzia Sechi of ETUC highlighted their training and mentoring programmes and study visits in Brussels. She stressed that the translation fund was available for the Turkish social partners only until the end of 2009 and invited them to make full use of it.

A trade union participant inquired about the labour market analysis that had been conducted by the European level social partners and outlined in an earlier presentation. He inquired whether the methodology or support would be available for the Turkish social partners to undertake a similar initiative. Steven d’Haeseleer explained that the joint labour market analysis could serve as a source of inspiration and offered financing translation of the report.

In response to an employer comment on the changing priorities of the Turkish national social partners, the chairman commented that his impression was that the issues the Turkish social partners had been dealing with over the last 18 months were the issues on their own agenda and it was to their advantage that alternative funds were available to finance their actions on domestic priorities.

**Session seven (Plenary)** – *General discussion on the possible content/priorities of future action plans following the presentations from working groups and remarks from the EU social partners*

At the end of the meeting the European social partner organisations’ representatives offered their insights.

Cinzia Sechi of ETUC thanked the Turkish social partners for their efforts and observed that there was a different atmosphere from that of two years ago: the discussion was in fact more focused on what the national social partners could do jointly in the future rather than on problems. She regretted that not all the ETUC members took part to this seminar as they did in the first phase. She was however impressed by the quality and the number of the projects already undertaken which seemed to be a part of a wider strategy rather than a series of individual initiatives. She concluded that there were still things that needed to be done to further develop the social dialogue process and there were important issues on the agenda like vocational training, combating illegal work and increasing the involvement of women in the formal labour market. She stressed that the EU level social partners were eager to help the Turkish social partners to develop appropriate strategies.

Liliane Volozinskis of UEAPME congratulated the Turkish social partners on the level of their participation which she believed to be proof of heightened involvement. She was also impressed by the openness and the richness of the discussions and the activities already



undertaken. It was reinforced that important issues like lifelong learning and the grey economy remained on the agenda, topics fully in line with the EU social partner agenda.

Valeria Ronzitti of CEEP suggested that it normally fell to her to point out deficiencies, but at this seminar there was little to criticize. She was impressed by the things that had been accomplished during the last two years and the quality of implemented projects. She suggested that public enterprises and private employers could share priorities and agendas to mutual benefit in the working of the labour market. She finally added that the principles of flexicurity could be of use for all countries and therefore the joint analysis of key challenges facing the EU labour markets should be the starting points for future activities of the Turkish social partners.

Steven d'Haeseleer of BUSINESSEUROPE explained that despite the fact that he was not present at the first seminar, he was able to see that the EU level agenda and the Turkish social partners' agenda was a shared one. He recalled that the important issues raised today had been undeclared work, vocational training, lifelong learning – and these were the same issues that were addressed in the joint labour market analysis and were being addressed by the EU level social partners. He observed that the present crisis and defining the ways to deal with the employment and labour market effect were major challenges. He suggested that the crisis brought the need for a more advanced social dialogue at all levels and imposed on the national social partners an obligation to play an important role that required more trust and cooperation. He concluded his comments by giving thanks to Fatih Tokatli of TISK for organizing the seminar and all of the participants for the very warm welcome they had offered.

At the close of the meeting, thanks were offered to the Turkish social partners for their participation and attending the meeting in such a large group – special thanks were offered to TISK for organization of the seminar. Thanks were also offered to the European social partners for their participation and to the interpreters.

### **List of Appendices**

Appendix one	Seminar attendance list
Appendix two	Seminar agenda
Appendix three	Presentation on the European Social Dialogue agenda and plans for the future

## Appendix 2

## AGENDA

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

National Seminar: TURKEY  
 Venue: Sheraton Hotel, Ankara  
 Date: Tuesday 3 February 2009

0900 – 0915	Welcome, introductions and purpose of the day	Alan Wild, EU social partners
0915 – 1030	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
1030 – 1045	Coffee Break	
1045 – 1130	European level social partner presentation on the European Social Dialogue agenda and plans for the future	EU social partners in plenary
1130 – 1135	Briefing of working groups (employers, trade unions and joint)	Alan Wild in plenary
1135 – 1300	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
1300 – 1430	Lunch Break	
1430 – 1530	Presentations from the working groups and questions on the proposed actions	Plenary session
1530 – 1600	Review of the tools offered by European social partners.  - What has been most and least useful?  - What could be done in the future?	EU social partners  Followed by:  Plenary session
1600 – 1615	Coffee Break	
1615 – 1700	General discussion on the possible content / priorities of future action plans following the presentations from working groups and the EU social partners	Plenary session
1700 – 1715	Summary and close	Plenary session



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