



14 September 2016, Brussels

Joint Statement

First evaluation of the work program of the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for ports

A good start of dialogue for concrete results

In June 2013, ETF, IDC, FEPORT and ESPO¹ have established, with the support of the European Commission, the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for ports (SSDC for Ports). Through this committee, social partners intend to work jointly to contribute to the improvement of working and living conditions for the people employed in the sector as well to the competitiveness and productivity within EU ports.

In the course of 2014, the EU social partners have been able to agree on an agenda which includes a number of issues: health and safety, training and qualifications and the inclusion of women in the port sector.

By the end of 2015, the Social partners warmly thanked the Commission for its support in having ensured the chairmanship of SSDC meetings and considered that it was time for the Committee to be chaired and co-chaired by representatives from the employers and employees.

Mr. Xavier Galbrun (FEPORT Chair of the Social Affairs Committee) was appointed for a term of one year as the Chair of the SSDC for ports while Mr. Mike Gibbons was appointed as the Vice Chair of the Committee.

Regarding health and safety and more particularly the issue of safety of work on board of ships, social partners have initiated good discussions with representatives from the shipping industry (ECSA and ICS) to find joint solutions to minimize risks on board of ships for port workers. The Commission is also assisting the social partners and ECSA in this respect. In this domain, we are seeking to tackle two issues in particular: clarifying and ensuring proper enforcement of existing legislation; improving communication and information sharing on safety hazards on board.

Risks for port workers resulting from exposure to fumigants are also a matter of concern for social partners who have requested the assistance of the European Union information agency for occupational safety and health (OSHA) and the Commission to find appropriate solutions.

Last but not least, interesting discussions regarding the impact of market based developments (increase in size of ships, shipping alliances, impact of the financial crisis) and technological innovation have also been discussed and social partners have decided to request from DG Employment a grant to finance a study on the impact of the above mentioned developments on ports operations.

¹ ESPO in its capacity of representing Bulgarian Port Infrastructure Company, Cyprus Port Authority, Union des Ports de France, Transport Malta, NC Port Administration Constantza, Sveriges Hamnar, British Ports Association, UK Major Ports Group.

The establishment of the Social Dialogue Committee for Ports coincided with the start of the legislative procedure regarding the Ports Regulation (former Port Services Regulation). The exchanges between the social partners in the framework of the SSDC have allowed the emergence of converging positions on a number of issues such as training and the role of social dialogue.

Social partners are satisfied to see that the text jointly agreed upon last June 27th by the Council, the European Parliament and the Commission includes social provisions and confirms the role and the competence of the Social Dialogue for Ports regarding the issues that are part of its agenda, especially those related to training and qualifications.

Europe has proven to be a global leader in regards to port training and qualifications and this has been acknowledged by a number of surveys detailing the diversity of the training schemes in The EU.

Many terminals in the EU are the highest performing in operations, and among the safest in the world. This is in a large part due to the good work done by social partners throughout Europe. Social partners are confident that the Commission will continue to respect the autonomy of social partners on training and qualifications so as to ensure that Europe continues to be a global leader in port training.

Social partners will remain committed to the objectives of the Social Dialogue for Ports and hope that the Commission will continue to respect the ongoing work and dialogue regarding all items of the agenda, particularly those relating to training and qualifications.

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