

**« REINFORCE THE
REPRESENTATIVENESS
OF THE SOCIAL PARTNERS
IN THE SPORT SECTOR:
ROW THE BOAT PROJECT »**

FINAL COMMUNICATION

SOME BACKGROUND INFORMATION ABOUT THE “ROW THE BOAT” PROJECT (RBT PROJECT)

- ✚ **Call for proposals: budget heading 04.03.03.01 “Industrial Relations and Social Dialogue”**
- ✚ **Duration: 15 months - from 1st December 2006 to 29th February 2008**
- ✚ **Management group: EASE (leader) + EURO-MEI**
- ✚ **The social partners have been approached simultaneously but at 3 different levels:**
 - Level 1 - social partners who are identified at national level and already affiliated at EU level**
 - Level 2 - social partners identified at national level but not affiliated at EU level**
 - Level 3 - countries where the sport social partners do not exist at national level and are, of course, not affiliated at EU level**

SOME FIGURES

- ✚ **11 organisations in the project partnership (3 EU organisations, 8 national social partner organisations, 6 nationalities represented)**
- ✚ **237 social partner organisations listed in the RBT database (158 employees and 79 employers)**
- ✚ **10 targeted countries**
- ✚ **15 meetings in 15 months**
- ✚ **160 organisations met**
- ✚ **2 feasibility studies**
- ✚ **50 participants in the Final Conference coming from 13 EU countries**

THE PROJECT RESULTS

1/ To have an overview of the social partner organisations operating in the sport sector in all the EU Member States through the 2 “Maps of the 100” (Preliminary research)

We have achieved this expected result through:

- the RBT database
- the information card on social dialogue for each targeted country
- the overviews of the sport systems in the European Union

2/ To reinforce the link between EASE and EURO-MEI and to establish contact with the European social partner organisations in the sport sector (level 1)

- **Meetings with the European social partner organisations in professional sports**
 - EASE / EURO-MEI / EU Athletes
 - Professional Sports Meeting – 30 October 2007, Brussels
- **Meetings with the professional football social partners and representatives**
 - EASE / EPFL (European Professional Football Leagues)
 - EASE / UEFA
 - EURO-MEI / FIFPro
 - Professional Sports Meeting – 30 October 2007, Brussels
- **Meetings between EASE and EURO-MEI: in total, 15 formal meetings in 15 months!**

Level 1

- Professional Sports Meeting, 30 October 2007, Brussels
- Informal Social Dialogue Meeting, 17 January 2008, Brussels

Level 2

- 6 round tables: Spain, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Portugal, Austria

Level 3

- 4 country visits: Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, the Czech Republic

and

- 2 Full Partner Meetings
- the Final Conference
- countless phone calls, telephone conferences, e-mails and informal exchanges of information and opinions

- **Outcome of this level: a feasibility study for a future application for the creation of a European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for the sport sector**

This study outlines the initiatives that have been taken to lay the foundations on which a European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee (ESSDC) can be built, such as the BSDSS project, the RBT project and numerous informal initiatives from both EASE and EURO-MEI to establish contact with national social partners in the sport sector. It also lists the advantages of a ESSDC compared to the current situations and emphasises the need for further professionalisation of the sport sector through European social dialogue.

3/ To strengthen the European social partners representing the whole sport sector and increase their representativeness (level 2)

- Organisations coming from 3 countries have expressed their interest in joining EASE
- Organisations coming from 10 countries newly identified as representing the sport sector among the affiliates of UNI-Europa and EURO-MEI

4/ To structure employer and employee organisations in the countries where the social dialogue in sports is emerging (level 3)

This expected result was very ambitious. Social dialogue in the sport sector is at an early stage in Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic. The RBT project has laid the foundations for a long process. Those country visits allowed us to have a good overview of the sport sector in the targeted countries.

The outcome of this level is the production of **a feasibility study on the creation of national employer and employee organisations in the 4 visited countries**. This study summarises the current situation in those countries, the actions needed to establish social partner organisations and to let them engage in social dialogue, and the assistance and support that can be offered by the European social partners for the sport sector. The document will form the basis for new initiatives in this field in the 4 countries and will provide guidelines for other EU countries where social dialogue in the sport sector is emerging.

5/ A general outcome of the project is also the increase of the level of mutual knowledge on social dialogue in the sport sector in Europe through:

- the RBT meetings in the 10 targeted countries and the minutes of each meeting
- the RBT project section on EASE website
- the leaflet and the final communication
- the partners' dissemination activities (participation in conferences and exhibitions)
- the Final Conference

THE PROJECT FINAL CONFERENCE

Participants were given the opportunity to discuss topics related to social dialogue in the sport sector into more depth during working group sessions (separate meetings of employee organisations and employer organisations).

Feedback from the employer working group

Marie Leroux (EASE General Secretary and RBT Project Manager) reported the identified key issues on the employer side:

- the so called sport specificities,
- the European standard contract,
- vocational education and training,
- and health and safety.

The employer representatives agreed that it will be necessary to adapt the social dialogue committee to the priorities of social partners and that dialogue should cover very specific issues.

EASE is willing to continue cooperating with EURO-MEI on European social dialogue in the sport sector.

Feedback from the employee working group

Leif Nicklagard (EURO-MEI) reported that the group talked about education and training, mobility, health and safety, image rights, doping, minimum salaries and equal opportunities. Some people thought that the White Paper could act as a platform for social dialogue. It was agreed that it will probably be best to start with soft issues: issues on which a consensus is easily reached.

Bernadette Ségol (UNI-Europa Regional Secretary) underlined the rules and structure under which UNI-Europa works and which allow it to be recognised as a social partner by the European Commission. Dealing with soft issues first is a way of responding to members' needs and interests in the sport sector.

UNI-Europa will continue to work with EASE on social dialogue in sport and will seek to construct the dialogue with them in a very positive way, as well as with the European Commission.

Introduction of the Joint declaration on the mutual recognition of EASE and EURO-MEI and the social dialogue

Jim Wilson (EURO-MEI Director) summarised the Joint declaration. Firstly, it includes a commitment to support social dialogue at European and national level. Secondly, it is the first step towards establishing the European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee. Thirdly, the social dialogue is key in improving the professional standards in the sector. Fourthly, there is an interest in encouraging dialogue at different levels. Fifthly, there is a commitment to provide coordination between the different levels of social dialogue. Sixthly, EASE and EURO-MEI believe that the social dialogue should follow the European social model. Seventhly, EASE and EURO-MEI will take practical measures to promote mutual recognition between their members.

THE FOLLOW-UP

As regards the follow-up of the RBT project, it is important to apply for establishment of a European Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee for sports and initiate a project to look in greater detail at the content of social dialogue. This project will consist of three meetings: two content-based conferences and one informal social dialogue meeting.

EASE and EURO-MEI will continue to promote the social dialogue within the sport sector in line with the White Paper on Sport of the European Commission. They have already informed the EC of their interest in the establishment of an ESSDC for sports and have requested the EC to take action.

« (53) The Commission encourages and welcomes all efforts leading to the establishment of European Social Dialogue Committees in the sport sector. It will continue to give support to both employers and employees and it will pursue its open dialogue with all sport organisations on this issue ».

The White Paper on Sport – Action Plan Pierre de Coubertin

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