



Joint statement of the EU social partners in the postal sector on Corporate Social Responsibility

Introduction:

In 1999 the Social Dialogue Committee for the postal sector was set up by the Postal Enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal as Social Partners which represent employers and workers in the postal sector.

The Social Dialogue Committee was created with the following aims:

- To advise the European Commission on initiatives relative to social policy and on the developments in European policy which could have a social impact on the postal and allied services sector
- To encourage and promote social dialogue within the postal and allied services sector in order to contribute to the development of jobs and to the improvement of working conditions of those working in this sector
- To discuss appropriate structures to allow negotiations between the partners in the sector

The following initiatives were pursued by the Social Dialogue Committee:

- Equal Opportunities
- Training and competencies development
- Enlargement
- Corporate Social Responsibility
- Accident Prevention

Besides, the Social Dialogue has created a web-site with the financial backing of the European Commission. It groups together good practices gathered from postal services and trade unions on a theme which includes, training, development of skills and equal opportunities. It was expanded in 2005 with a new collection of good practices relating to life-long training and the social responsibility of companies.

Against the background of the ongoing CSR debate in Europe and the different initiatives launched by the European Commission in the last years, the Social Dialogue Committee has considered CSR a relevant topic for the Postal Sector. The first collection of good practices from 2003/ 2004 as well as the second one from 2005 contribute to this and form the basis of a joint conference held in Rome on 27th – 28th of October 2005. The conference was in line with other conferences to promote life-long learning, equal opportunities or the better understanding of Social Dialogue for the new member states.

CSR-Conference Contribution:

The conference in Rome contributed to the initiated process on CSR in the Postal sector. Its aim was to analyse and share the best practices collected by Employers and Trade Unions in order to identify the role of CSR in the Postal Sector and its possible further evolution and to foster the dialogue on CSR between them.

It brought together Representatives from the European Commission as well as high level Experts and the Social Partners to debate the key specifics of CSR, the impact on the Postal Sector and its further activities. The Conference included speeches, plenary discussions and a round table.

Objectives and key principles:

1. The Postal industry employs more than 1,85 mio. people in the European Union and contributes with around 0,9% to the GDP of the Union¹. The Postal Sector recognises its role **as integral part of society**, offering goods, services and employment. Therefore, the postal sector needs to operate in a responsible and sustainable manner, alongside other actors.
2. The Postal enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal note the Commission Green Paper on promoting a European framework for Corporate Social Responsibility², the Commission Communication concerning Corporate Social Responsibility³, as well as the Council resolution of 2-3 December 2002⁴, **defining CSR** as a "concept whereby companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis".
3. Accordingly, the **baseline understanding** of the Postal enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal is that CSR involves the integration of the principles and values of the individual enterprises in their internal methods and processes. CSR goes beyond compliance with legal requirements and contractual obligations, not replacing or avoiding them. CSR is about the core business activities of a company and is based on dialogue with stakeholders to balance their expectations.
4. Facing a continuous technological evolution and new market demands in a globalised world, CSR can help the Postal Enterprises to **add value to their business**.

¹ Application Report KOM/2005/0102/ Study of WIK-Consultants from 2002

² COM(2001) 366 final

³ COM(2002) 347 final

⁴ Resolution of the Employment and Social Policy Council on CSR, Brussels, 2-3 December 2002

For example, by responding to customers' and societal needs, by attracting and retaining good employees, by developing innovative products, by improving the quality of service, efficiency and productivity, by enhancing their brand and reputation in the eyes of their customers, employees and other stakeholders. Thus, ensuring their financial health and sustainability and **contributing to the long-term progress in the European Postal Sector**, not only on internal level, but also for the community/ society in general.

5. The Postal Enterprises and UNI Europa Postal support a balanced and broad approach to CSR, including economic, social and environmental issues. In their social dialogue, both promote the contribution to the CSR agenda **as one important means amongst many** for achieving economic, social and environmental progress, and for integrating these concerns into the business practice of the companies.
6. **CSR means an effort** by all those concerned towards meeting shared objectives by entering into dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, including the company's own employees as integral part of the company and their representatives. Therefore, CSR is not only related to external aspects, but also to internal aspects such as e.g. development of skills and competencies, health & safety at work, equal opportunities.
7. The Postal enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal **have already undertaken many initiatives** related to CSR. The recent approaches to promote life-long learning, accident prevention, equal opportunities or the better understanding of Social Dialogue for the new member states have to be mentioned in this respect.

Besides, the **significant number of collected good practices** through which CSR is expressed, reflects the particular characteristics of the involved Social Partners. Both sides welcome these positive and active approaches and support the further implementation of CSR practices together with their stakeholders.

8. CSR is an **ongoing learning process** for the postal enterprises and stakeholders. The development of tools and practices is work in progress. The Postal Enterprises and stakeholders need to consider their approaches carefully and to choose tools which suit their particular culture, operational styles and needs and respond well to stakeholders' expectations. Approaches might have to be refined and developed over time, responding to changing circumstances and expectations. Scope for flexibility, innovation and refinement is important for successful CSR.

Conclusions:

Responding to the challenge of promoting social corporate behaviour, the Postal Enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal, would like to endeavour to:

- **promote corporate social responsibility** throughout daily business activities among our members, with a special focus on the new members.

- **raise awareness** about CSR in the European postal sector through dialogue, exchange of information, expertise, best practices and appropriate communication as CSR is a learning process, involving quality improvement over time,
- **inform on and further develop** the social dialogue between employers and employees at European, national and company levels, on appropriate issues related to corporate social responsibility,
- **familiarise** our members **about existing good practices and initiatives**. To make them easily available, the web-site of the Social Dialogue shall be used as platform for the collection, the diffusion and the exchange of this relevant information,
- contribute to the development of a CSR-approach in accordance with the **Lisbon Strategy**.

The outcome of the conference shows that corporate social responsibility is developing in the Postal Sector and that **CSR is an important concept for a company's management and work force and is helpful for company's long term success** as stated by the Commission in the green paper on CSR and the Lisbon Agenda.

The Postal Enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal encourage the postal sector to **further develop and demonstrate own initiatives**, taking account of national company practices.

Inspired by the results of the **CSR-conference** the Social Dialogue Committee aims at continuing the work on CSR, identifying possible matters for the further evolution and next steps. The Postal Enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal will keep track of the progress of the CSR initiatives in the context of the Social Dialogue Committee of the Postal Sector.

The Postal Enterprises under the umbrella of PostEurop and UNI Europa Postal share the objective of **long-term prosperity of the postal industry** in Europe and consider that an **essential ingredient** for its success within the field of CSR is a **mutual respect and understanding** of the individual interests of both companies and employees.

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