

Minutes - Board Meeting EUCDW

Thursday 9 April 11:30 in Valencia

Attendees: David Cervera Olivares, Dennis Radtke, Liesbet Sommen, Antonio Di Matteo, Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Margo Molkenboer, Pedro Roque, Sigrid Schraml, Francisco Dominguez, Javier Morillas, José Ignacio Argote Veja-Murguia, Michael Schediwy-Klusek, David Agius, Maria Reina Martin, Mario do Céu Moleiro, Pavel Matousek, Vostech Matousek, Nina De Smedt, Online: Ria Oomen-Ruijten, Julie Hendrickx-Devos, and Luc Vanden Brande

Not able to come: Reiner Meier, Bernd Schulze-Waltrup

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Introduction by Dennis

It is a pleasure to meet in person here in Spain and to engage with workers' organisations from across Europe. Today, we have an important and inspiring European agenda, focusing on the organisation of the European labour market and related policies, and we very much look forward to your input and perspectives.

Discussing position papers

EPP working group MFF position paper EUCDW

- Introduction to position paper by President MEP Dennis Radtke: The current architecture of MFF is a problem. ESF+ has a great local and regional value,

however is being nationalized. In this position paper, we call for a strong MFF which keeps ESF+ as stand-alone fund instead of currently under national plans.

- We are a people's party: we take care of farmers, workers, families, every single citizen... and thus EU's social spending should be promoted in order to invest in people.
- We are happy to receive strong support within EPP, coming also from the German delegation, the Austrian delegation,... They understood the need for social policies and the related budgets.
- Our main message thus is to keep a stand-alone ESF+.

RIA:

- Question on 14% budget that is set aside for social spending in the new architecture: When compared to current social fund is this less?
→ yes, complete proposal is bad, in theory everyone is equal now, but social spending all over Europe will decrease.
- Question on the majority to keep esf as standalone?
→ Difficult question to tackle: We have the impression that we have a majority in the parliamentary group, socialist are strongly supporting our position, some local and regional parties are pushing. We are coming closer to the decision, so this is now the moment to start pushing. We want to invite you as EUCDW board members to phone your MEPs from your respective countries to support this ESF+ standalone fund.

Sigrid:

- She asks for an amendment in the text to include one sentence against the renationalisation of MFF, focusing on a clean budget → This is a great point, this will be adopted.

EPP working group competitiveness position paper EUCDW

Introduction to position paper by Secretary-General MEP Liesbet Sommen: As Social movement within the European People's party we put human capital in the center of competitiveness, this is a very important topic and narrative to promote as social movement.

- It was emphasised that both companies and workers share a common interest in ensuring safe working environments and in empowering people to participate fully in work.
- The importance of a strong skills strategy was underlined in order to reshape the current narrative; anticipating the impact of the green and digital transitions requires equipping people with the skills needed for new types of jobs.

- It was noted that this perspective is currently underrepresented in European political debate, and that efforts should be made to open and strengthen this discussion.
- Regarding bureaucracy, it was agreed that the narrative should shift towards smart regulation that balances efficiency with clear social and environmental objectives.

Luc:

He agrees with the position statement and has two small remarks in order to make it better:

- Change strong social market economy by adding competitive “*sustainable*” social market economy. → This is a great point, this will be adopted.
- Which approach will we take? To summarize in 3 elements? 1) The measures and instruments discussed should not be seen as an end in themselves, but as tools to support broader economic and social objectives. 2) They must be explicitly linked to social cohesion, the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights, and the need for a renewed social pact, to ensure fairness and trust in times of transition 3) This position paper must more explicitly mention genuine social dialogue, involving public authorities and social partners at all stages, from policy design to implementation. → These points are very well taken, and thus will be adopted.

Sigrid

- The position paper should more explicitly mention mental health of workers → This is a great point, this will be adopted.
- 2nd paragraph strategic independence should be a separate paragraph. → This is a great point, this will be adopted.

Ria:

- She asks what the purpose of the paper is? Is it to prevent a social omnibus or is there already a social omnibus?
- Dennis answers that it is widely lobbied and asked by Business Europe. However last week he asked whether there is a plan in the commission(EC) for a social omnibus, the answer was no. We still have to make some noise to keep it that way. Thus the line against a social omnibus should further be defended, also within EPP working groups. Another objective highlighted by Liesbet is the need to develop a shared language within the EPP, and across Europe, to discuss competitiveness. This common narrative would help create coherence in our positions and serve as a reference framework for policy discussions and public debate.

Margo:

- Margo stresses the need to reframe the discussion as such: the way to achieve competitiveness should go through investing in skilled workers. It is called the 'high road', in contrast to what EU is doing now being 'low road' lowering labour standards, lessening social dialogue,...
- Social partners (both employers organisations and workers organisations) have jointly prepared a report on improving skills and skills matching, with a stronger link between workers and training programmes under the framework of the "Union of Skills." As this is a shared interest for both businesses and workers, the report could be used to reinforce the EUCDW position paper.
- → It was agreed that this is a valuable contribution. The concrete wording will be adopted based on the proposals circulated by Margot via email. There was broad agreement on the need to emphasise human capital as Europe's greatest asset, with skilled workers recognised as the foundation for innovation and long-term competitiveness.

Javier;

- Some fundamental words are already mentioned in the position paper: eg social market economy, smart regulation, sustainable employment, however he misses the field of energy dependence → great idea, now we also include it more profoundly in the revised position paper.

David Agius

- What next steps will we take with these position papers? Besides being a paper, speak about it yes but it is not enough. Each position paper should be signed by EUCDW president + sec-gen + vice-pres + all representatives from member organisations. This enhances the signal that can be sent out to MEPs, **to distribute our idea and to be able to defend** our position within EP and all over Europe. → EUCDW will take the necessary steps to increase the credibility of the position papers by signing them with as many as possible from our member organisations.

Liesbet Sommen invites EUCDW board members to submit their written comments to Nina. Based on this feedback, a revised version will be circulated for a final review and for endorsement by the Vice-Presidents and representatives of the member organisations.

Participants are also encouraged to contact Nina should they have additional suggestions for topics to be advocated at EU level.

Political work update

MEP Dennis Radtke describes the advancements in terms of the **Firewall to far-right** which we aim to uphold by strengthening the democratic political linkages. Our MEPs cooperate on a structured basis with democratic parties of the political centre and centre-left through so-called 'platform' coordinators when they hold responsibility for a specific policy file. We aim to preserve this norm by further strengthening these cooperative relationships with platform MEP coordinators. Sustained dialogue and trust-building with platform coordinators therefore remain a key priority.

We have to bring this reinforcement of democratic norms and cooperation on the agenda politically as it has a profound impact on people's personal lives.

MEP Liesbet Sommen summarizes several ongoing EU policy-making processes she has been working on:

- **EGF** (European Globalisation Fund) used to be a fund only for people who had lost their jobs. Now, this fund is redirected to work more proactively to reskill workers within businesses that undergo severe changes due to for example the digital transition. One mayor problem is that in the next MFF not enough attention is given to ESF+, so EGF will cease to exist. This has to be counteracted (see our position paper).
- **CMRD6** *health of workers* file working with limits for exposure to carcinogens, this will be voted next Wednesday (15/4) in EMPL committee.
- Coming up is **pension reform**: from employers to supplementary pensions: *third pillar* called PEPP is not working how it should, so it will need to be reformed. Next to 2nd pillar we have to provide workers with credibility and safety in investments for own pension income. => We will cooperate with Ria to overcome problems with administration/tax regulation. She has great experience with pensions policies starting in 2014 when the commission came up with PEPP, now we should look at means to make it better.
- **Cross border health revision** together with patients right directive, regulation 883 covers health care across border, unplanned care or severe illness with specialised care across the border, very complex administrative rules will be streamlined.

Question on what the state of play of cohesion policy is?

- No need for nationalisation, no need for renationalisation, what with regional cohesion policy --> no latest information MEP Dennis Radtke or Liesbet Sommen. We will give an update to Luc → Nina will send it

David Agius raises the problem with ETS in ports in southern Europe. This is an issue affecting workers and families as this EU ETS 'emission trading system (ETS)' moves away ships to North-African ports as they do not have to comply with ETS regulations. This raises costs for normal families => what can we do at European level? We have to ensure a level playing field for the whole sector, however *no one size fits all policy*.

EUCDW Resolution

Nina Additionally we are drafting a resolution together with ESU (Seniors organisation within EPP), EPP Women and hopefully also YEPP will join (Youth organisation within EPP). This also taps into the competitiveness policy "Balancing competitiveness and social progress in a transforming Europe". This could be a great opportunity to send an endorsed signal to EPP of the strength of associations like EUCDW to push for a certain narrative.

Any other business:

Nina

- Treaty signing documents!
- Audit of 2025 financial year was performed, next year our reports will be assessed by auditor Michael Schediwy-Klusek (as replacer of Andreas).
- Visit our **new website** and provide us (Nina: euCDW@epp.eu) with the necessary info of your organisation and the EUCDW board members:
<https://www.euCDW.org/>
- Membership survey: **Please fill it in** [EUCDW Membership survey – Fill out form](#)
We also provide a possibility to go through the survey together with Nina in an online Teams meeting.