



EUROPEAN SOCIAL PARTNERS' AUTONOMOUS FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT ON ACTIVE AGEING AND AN INTER-GENERATIONAL APPROACH

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1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the challenges deriving from demographic change, the European social partners, BusinessEurope, UEAPME, CEEP and the ETUC (and the liaison committee EUROCADRES/CEC), agreed in the context of their 2015-2017 Work Programme to negotiate an autonomous framework agreement on active ageing and an inter-generational approach.

The European social partners note that measures need to be implemented, where necessary at national, sectoral and/or company levels, to make it easier for older workers to actively participate and stay in the labour market until the legal retirement age, and at the same time make sure that measures are taken in order to ease inter-generational transitions in the context of high youth unemployment.

Such measures should be aimed at significantly improving the ability of workers of all ages to stay in the labour market, healthy and active until the legal retirement age, as well as strengthening a culture of responsibility, commitment, respect and dignity in all workplaces where all workers are valued as important irrespective of age.

This framework agreement constitutes the contribution of the social partners to the EU policies (including non-discrimination legislation) and actions which have already been developed to support active ageing and the intergenerational approach. This agreement therefore aims to build upon and enhance the existing measures and approaches that are in place in different contexts across Europe. It outlines tools/measures to be taken into account by social partners and/or HR managers in the context of national demographic and labour market realities, and in accordance with national practices and procedures specific to management and labour.

The framework agreement is based on the principle that ensuring active ageing and the inter-generational approach requires a shared commitment on the part of employers, workers and their representatives.

The social partners are aware of the fact that successfully addressing the challenges deriving from demographic change does not depend exclusively on their action. EU and national public authorities and other actors have responsibilities in terms of ensuring that there is a framework which encourages and promotes active ageing and the inter-generational approach.

2. AIMS

With this autonomous agreement, European social partners establish a general action-oriented framework, aiming at:

- Increasing the awareness and understanding of employers, workers and their representatives of the challenges and opportunities deriving from demographic change;
- Providing employers, workers and their representatives at all levels with practical approaches and/or measures to promote and manage active ageing in an effective manner;
- Ensuring and maintaining a healthy, safe and productive working environment;
- Fostering innovative life-cycle approaches with productive and quality jobs to enable people to remain in work until legal retirement age;
- Facilitating exchanges, mutual cooperation and fostering concrete actions to transfer knowledge and experience between generations at the workplace.

3. DESCRIPTION

Active ageing is about optimising opportunities for workers of all ages to work in good quality, productive and healthy conditions until legal retirement age, based on mutual commitment and motivation of employers and workers.

Inter-generational approach refers to building on the strengths and the objective situation of all generations, improving mutual understanding and supporting cooperation and solidarity between generations at the workplace.

4. SOCIAL PARTNERS' TOOLS, MEASURES AND ACTIONS

A) Strategic assessments of workforce demography

Social partners recognise the added value of strategic assessments of workforce demography, carried out and periodically updated at the appropriate levels, in accordance with national practices and procedures.

Such assessments by social partners/management should take advantage of already existing activities, thereby avoiding unnecessary reporting requirements and could lead them to develop tools more tailored and adapted to the needs of workers and enterprises, notably SMEs.

These strategic assessments could amongst others include:

- Current and projected age pyramid, including gender aspects;
- Skills, qualifications and experience;
- Working conditions;
- Job specific health and safety considerations in particular for arduous occupations;
- Developments linked to digitalisation and innovation.

These strategic assessments would help to provide a basis for employers, workers and/or their representatives, in accordance with national practices and procedures, to evaluate risks and opportunities and take necessary actions to adapt to changing demographics, as set out in the following sections of the agreement. However, many of the actions foreseen in this agreement can be undertaken without the completion of such assessments.

Social partners have also a role to disseminate information on effective tools within their membership, including based on practice in other European countries, and to transfer the necessary know-how on how to use them.

B) Health and safety at the workplace

The social partners at the appropriate levels aim to promote and facilitate action at the workplace based on proper information, identifying for instance the tasks which are particularly physically and/or mentally demanding. This should be done to anticipate, prevent and assess risks for health and safety at the workplace, in accordance with the EU framework directive on health and safety at work (89/391/EEC). This should indicate whether practicable adjustments to the working environment are necessary to prevent or reduce identified excessive physical or mental demands on workers to allow them to be safe and healthy while at work until the legal retirement age.

Tools/measures to support health and safety at the workplace could amongst others include:

- Adjustment of work processes and workplaces;
- Re-distribution/allocation of tasks to workers;
- Effective prevention strategies and risk assessment, taking into account existing legislative obligations, including training of all workers on health and safety rules at the workplace;
- Voluntary health promotion including, for example awareness raising actions;
- Knowledge-building of management at the appropriate levels in order to address challenges and possible solutions in this field;
- Health and safety measures taking account of the physical and psychological health of workers;
- Review of health and safety measures between management and health and safety representatives, in accordance with existing legislative requirements.

C) Skills and competence management

The approach should be to support skills development and lifelong learning, thus, fostering workers' employability and maximizing the enterprises' human capital in terms of competences and know-how.

Social partners have a role to facilitate a fair access for workers, regardless of age, to a sufficiently broad offer of training, according to national practices and procedures, whilst all workers should be encouraged to participate in this training.

Tools/measures to support skills and competences management could amongst others include:

- Awareness-raising towards management and workers' representatives of skills needs in an age perspective;
- Training for workers of all ages, aiming to maintain and further develop necessary knowledge and competence throughout their careers to remain at work until legal retirement age;
- Facilitate and support personal career development and mobility;
- Motivate and increase participation in training to ensure up-to-date skills in particular digital skills;
- Embedding age management into broader skills development;
- Identifying formal and informal competences that workers have acquired in the course of their working life.

D) Work organisation for healthy and productive working lives

The social partners at the appropriate levels aim to support and encourage enterprises to adapt work organisation, in accordance with the needs of enterprises and workers. The purpose is to foster healthy and productive working lives in a life course perspective.

Social partners and/or management should facilitate, promote and encourage implementation of adaptable work organisation over the life course. This should be done collectively and/or individually, in accordance with the social dialogue practices at the workplace.

Management in enterprises has a role in identifying possible improvements in terms of task allocation, and to maintain and improve health and safety at work and productivity of the workers they manage.

Tools/measures on work organisation for healthy and productive working lives could amongst others include:

- Fostering the capacity of both young and older workers to better anticipate and adapt to changes in work organisation, to maximise the potential of human resources;
- Working arrangements, including with regard to working time;
- Adapting allocation of tasks between workers;
- Providing necessary means to managers on age related issues;
- Fighting stereotypes related to age, for example by establishing mixed-aged teams;
- Transition measures for older workers towards the end of their working life;
- Recruitment of new staff.

E) Inter-generational approach

The social partners at the appropriate levels aim to achieve a working environment which enables workers of all generations and ages to work together to enhance cooperation and inter-generational solidarity. One means to achieve this is mutual transfer of knowledge and experience between different age groups of workers.

All workers should be valued according to their abilities, skills and knowledge, irrespective of age, avoiding stereotyping and overcoming barriers between age groups, where they exist.

Tools/measures to achieve inter-generational solidarity could amongst others include:

- Distributing tasks according to ability/skills/knowledge;
- Tutoring/mentoring/coaching schemes to welcome and introduce younger workers to their working environment, including paths to allow them to fulfil their potential;

- Knowledge/skills transfer programmes, both younger towards older workers and older towards younger workers, including IT and digital skills, transversal skills, customer relations skills, as appropriate;
- The creation of knowledge banks to capture specific know how and professional intelligence developed in-house and pass it on to newcomers;
- Awareness-raising on the importance of being age positive and promotion of age diversity including considering different possibilities regarding the balance between ages within teams;
- Collaboration with education institutions or public employment services to ease transitions into and within the labour market.

5. IMPLEMENTATION AND FOLLOW-UP

This framework agreement is an autonomous initiative and the result of negotiations between the European social partners as part of their fifth multiannual work programme for 2015-2017 on “Partnership for inclusive growth and employment”.

In the context of article 155 of the Treaty, this autonomous European framework agreement commits the members of BusinessEurope, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC (and the liaison committee EUROCADRES/CEC) to promote and to implement tools and measures, where necessary at national, sectoral and/or company levels, in accordance with the procedures and practices specific to management and labour in the Member States and in the countries of the European Economic Area.

The signatory parties also invite their member organisations in candidate countries to implement this agreement.

The implementation of this agreement will be carried out within three years after the date of signature of this agreement.

Member organisations will report on the implementation of this agreement to the Social Dialogue Committee. During the first three years after the date of signature of this agreement, the Social Dialogue Committee will prepare and adopt a yearly table summarising the on-going implementation of the agreement. A full report on the implementation actions taken will be prepared by the Social Dialogue Committee and adopted by the European social partners during the fourth year. In case of no reporting and/or implementation after four years and after evaluation in, and when supported by, the Social Dialogue Committee, the European social partners will engage in joint actions together with the national social partners of the countries concerned in order to identify the best way forward in implementing this framework agreement in the national context.

The signatory parties shall evaluate and review the agreement any time after the five years following the date of signature, if requested by one of them.

In case of questions on the content of this agreement, member organisations involved can jointly or separately refer to the signatory parties, who will jointly or separately reply.

When implementing this agreement, the members of the signatory parties avoid unnecessary burdens on SMEs.

Implementation of this agreement does not constitute valid grounds to reduce the general level of protection afforded to workers in the field of this agreement.

This agreement does not prejudice the right of social partners to conclude, at the appropriate level, including European level, agreements adapting and/or complementing this agreement in a manner which will take note of the specific needs of the social partners concerned.

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