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EU Bank Social Partners Joint Statement

Employment & Social Affairs in the European Banking Sector:

Some Aspects Related to CSR

Introduction

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) was part of the 2003 and 2004 work programme of the European social partners in the banking sector in Europe. These are: the European Savings Banks Group, the European Association of Cooperative Banks, the European Banking Federation and UNI-Europa.

The European social partners in respect of their mandate and competence, agreed that the scope of CSR was too broad and therefore would concentrate on some employment and social affairs aspects of CSR, and in particular:

- Training, learning and development
- Core labour standards
- Work-life balance
- Internal Communications
- Equal Opportunity

A questionnaire was sent to a selection of banks in 24 European countries in June 2004. The purpose of the survey was to identify good practices in the five above-mentioned key areas. The responses formed the basis of a joint conference held on 10 December 2004.

Objectives and principles

Success in identifying, promoting and developing CSR in the five key areas listed in the project is a valuable contribution to the long-term achievements and progress in the European banking industry.

Moreover, the value of CSR depends on its credibility and transparency including the extent to which employees and employers are aware of the culture of CSR.

The results of the survey show that corporate social responsibility is developing in the banking industry and that CSR is an important tool 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.

Training, learning and development

The European social partners recognize that job-related training is a key instrument. This recognition follows from the joint declaration on life long learning of 2003.

Training can achieve higher standards of expertise as well as higher quality service. Forms of training offered by banks vary enormously in Europe and range from in-house training, to the use of external consultants or the provision of e-learning courses. Furthermore, in many countries and institutions, Bank Academies provide training programmes. Training opportunities range from job specific training, adaptation to change, leadership, products and sales, customer service, values and career planning including personal development. The European Social partners agree that the involvement of employee representatives or employees adds a broader perspective and may thus lead to even better results.

In this context, social partners agree that training programmes should be designed to ensure that staff and management can effectively integrate values, objectives and mission into their specific job.

Core labour standards

The social partners recognize that Core Labour Standards are widely implemented throughout Europe, such as the right to form and join a Trade Union and enter into collective bargaining. They derive from legislation, whether originating at ILO, EU or country level. Those standards should serve as guiding principles for industrial relations.

Company level procedures have been built and refined over time to suit the parties involved.

Social partners agree that key areas to consider include the procedures for handling job security and redundancies as well as those dealing with disciplinary and grievance proceedings.

The bank social partners regard it as important that employers inform and consult employees and their unions at the appropriate level and manner.

Work - life balance

The social partners underline the relevance of the work-life balance principle: working arrangements and policies should take into account this factor.

Such policies enhance job efficiency and bring flexibility at work to support business as well as personal objectives. People and family-friendly policies are already in place in many companies.

The social partners welcome creative and innovative approaches towards achieving work-life balance. Some of the results of the survey include the use of flexible working time and family-friendly policies in banks such as flexible retirements, sabbatical leaves, part-time work, maternity / paternity leave facilities and the use of tele-work.

Internal Communication

The social partners acknowledge that good internal communication is an important factor to build a constructive social climate.

Successful internal communications rely on the willingness of people to achieve good results.

They also recognize that many communication opportunities exist as in recent years, internet, intranet and other technological tools have facilitated the development of communication between the staff members including informal contacts.

The social partners agree that this can assist individuals contributing to the improvement of company procedures and practices e.g. through suggestion schemes, formal and informal surveys of staff opinion or regular informal bilateral contacts especially in the smallest institutions.

Equal Opportunity

The European social partners agree that equal opportunity is a fundamental principle.

Current experiences show that mainstreaming equality and diversity is an objective for the majority of companies.

The bank social partners recognise the value of identifying diversity in the company and of promoting the advantages of diversity and equality since the EU is rich in terms of its ethnic, cultural and gender background.

It is important that policies enhance the prospect of job opportunity and career development and contribute to the personal satisfaction.

Conclusions and follow-up

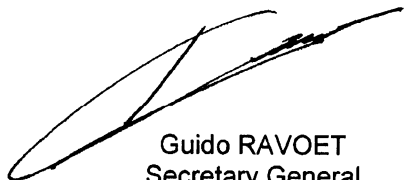
The bank social partners share the objective of long-term growth of the banking industry in Europe and consider that an essential ingredient for its success is a mutual respect and understanding of the interests of both employees and companies.

It is recognised that the European banking social dialogue committee has a valuable role to play in keeping track of the progress of the employment and social affairs related aspects of CSR as covered in this statement.

The present project follows and further develops the mechanisms applied in finalising the life long learning joint statement of 2003.

Whilst the European social partners agree to review this statement in the context of the bank social dialogue committee, they agree that the use of such practices is enhanced through voluntary means and in full respect of national/company practices.

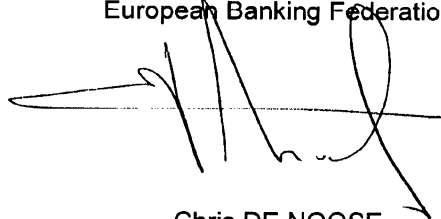
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