

Transnational company agreements and an optional legal framework discussed by ETUC



(7 April 2016) An optional legal framework at European level would be a welcome development. This was argued by several experts and trade union representatives at an ETUC conference devoted to the issue. A concrete proposal was presented and commented upon. Further discussion is needed on several aspects. The ETUC Executive Committee will draw its political conclusions.

There is a growing group of multi-national companies that negotiate a company wide agreement with the trade unions. EPSU itself is party to several agreements. We are bound [to sign a new one shortly with French company ENGIE](#). The experience across the trade unions and the European Federations is accumulating.

The legal status of the agreements is often unclear. This has an impact on their binding effect and implementation. Discussions on what could help strengthen and enforce such transnational company agreements goes back many years. A European Commission work programme raised it in 2005. The European Parliament has issued several resolutions on the topic supporting a framework recognizing the role of the European trade union federations. ETUC and affiliates have continued to work on the issue. Several experts reports have been published. The conference brought together experts, trade union expertise as well as employers to discuss a concrete proposal. It covered issues like the actors that sign agreements. It puts forward non-regression clauses, transparency of the mandates to negotiate as well as how to deal with disputes suggesting mediation. The framework remains optional. It is up to the unions and the employer (the transnational company) to make use of the framework.

The EPSU General Secretary spoke in a panel commenting on the proposal based on experience of the Federation. He welcomed the progress that has been made and the continued discussion. The proposal flows naturally from the experience of unions and companies. ETUC will continue exploring how best to make progress and including with the European employers' organisations.

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The meeting was hosted by the confederation FNV in the [Dutch trade union museum](#) in Amsterdam. The museum is located in the old building of the [Dutch diamond workers trade union](#). It was one of the first more centralised unions and had a strong position at the beginning of the 20th century. The building was designed by the well known [architect Berlage](#). It is located in the Henri Polakavenue (laan). Henri Polak was one of its visionary leaders. He further led the first Dutch trade union confederation.

The meeting took place 5 April 2016, Amsterdam. Guillaume Durivaux responsible for the utilities and EPSU 's work on corporations and company policy participated.

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