Promoting Social Dialogue in the postal sector in an enlarged Europe

The case of Bulgaria

- Bulgarian Posts Plc
- Trade Union Federation of communications
- Federation of communications “Podkrepa”

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Social dialogue at national level

• 5 officially recognised nationally representative employers’ organisations and 2 trade union confederations: of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria (CITUB) and of Labour “Podkrepa”;

• At national level, tripartite social dialogue takes place in the National Council for Tripartite Cooperation. Tripartite social dialogue (SD) at national, sectoral and branch levels is developing unevenly and contradictory.

• Both the processes and outcomes of SD and collective bargaining, as well as labour and trade union rights, have been put under pressure (increase of social security and min. wage, incomes for certain sectors - teachers, doctors, policemen;

• As per CITUB there is asymmetry between the economic and social dimension of the policy of the BG governments - limiting the role and scope of SD;
Postal market and BP Plc

• Since 1 January 2011, the postal sector in Bulgaria is fully liberalized. In 2015 the market of postal services in Bulgaria is formed by 154 licensed and registered operators.

• The staff in the private companies is not unionized. There are no employers’ organisations in the sector; Collective bargaining is carried on only within the historical operator BP Plc.

• The historical postal operator in Bulgaria, Bulgarian Posts Plc (Bulgarski Poshti EAD) (BP Plc) - established in 1879. 100% state-owned company - provides universal and non-universal postal services, and some ‘social functions’ (payment of unemployment benefits, social welfare and pensions). The obligation to provide the UPS throughout the country was assigned to BP Plc in 2010 (amendments to the Postal Services Act).

• In 2016 the network of BP Plc includes 2981 post offices covering the territory of the country. The sorting and exchange of the mail is executed in 6 exchange-sorting centers. The largest on the Balkans is in Sofia. BP Plc disposes of 454 vehicles – one of the biggest automobile park in the country.

• The total staff number is 10 508 employees;

• In 2016 the average wage in the company is much lower than the average for the country
3 trade unions (TUs) operate in BP Plc: the Trade Union Federation of Communications and the Federation of communications Podkrepa (both under the umbrella of the Confederations) and the Democratic Syndicate of Communications of the Association of Democratic Trade Unions. The first 2 are members of UNI Europa Post & Logistics.

Traditionally trade unions have been active in the Bulgarian posts since the beginning of 20 century. The trade union density is very high – at about 95% (compared to about 20% national average);

There is one single-employer agreement (BP Plc). The last collective labour agreement (CLA) is signed for 2016-2018. Includes ten chapters: object, corporate social responsibility, employment and training, wages, health and safety, working time and leaves, protection against discrimination, social policy and individual support of employees (in case of illness, etc.), information and consultation and social partnership.
The recent CLA is a 63 pages document, enough detailed to provide serious protection for the employees: there are large compensations envisaged in case of retirement, employees receive 1% for each year of service in the company and right of food vouchers per months. The annual leave is 24 working days. The coverage of collective bargaining in terms of employees in sector is 59.5%.

The CLA envisages that trade unions and the employer every year negotiate the minimal wage for the company, the bonuses, the wage increases, etc.

The CLA defines the company structure for social dialogue – the Social Partnership Council. This council includes 3 representatives of every trade union and representatives of the employer. They can invite experts and consultants. The domain of debates includes employment and labour relations, social policy, training, wages and conflicts.

In parallel to the formalised structures of social dialogue, unions are occasionally involved in discussing the business strategy of the company (within the Boards of Directors).
In 2016 the Management of the BP Plc and the 3 TUs signed an Agreement regarding “the prices” of the working places of the company’s staff, in force from 1st of January 2017 in compliance with a qualification table developed by the TUs:

1. A common plan with complex measures for the realization of the above will be developed;
2. Together to undertake activities for the organizational structure’s changes aiming at optimizing the processes, the management, the control, the reporting and transparency among the companies’ departments.
3. Together to start the optimization of the administrative staff;
4. The employer to start optimizing the postal network and together with the social partners - to review the working places in the post offices, working time, hourly engagement of the personnel etc.
5. The employer together with the social partners to work out a system for the remuneration of the personnel till the end of 2017.
In the new realities the social partnership is of crucial importance.

Problems – till nowadays, the company’s management was dependent on political nominations (each new government appoints new board members) and the usual practice was to develop short-term strategies, not always beneficial for the company;

Lately and at present – good cooperation and efficient social dialogue.
Digitalization of the postal services in BP Plc

• The Bulgarian Exchange and Sorting Center (launched 2007) with a sorting machine for simultaneous reading of Latin and Cyrillic alphabet;
• 3000 new computer configurations and servers for information storage were bought in 2016;
• An on-line Platform was implemented through which BP Plc clients can pay local taxes and charges as well as bills to the public services providers;
• A uniform information system for management and control of the financial transfers of BP Plc was developed;
• An on-line system of electronic pension card was implemented in 2015 permitting the pensions to be got from every postal office throughout the country;
• GPS system for track, trace and control of automobile park was installed;
The call center IMS/Bulpost with interactive system for voice answers (voice IVR) – for mail services with uniform No *6666 was renovated;

A satellite system for the remote areas to which there is no other connectivity, was installed;

Technological renovation of the private virtual network of the BP Plc, permitting work in real time, was performed;

In some postal offices free Wi-fi zones were established;

Subscription for periodicals is a traditional service offered by postal operators. Bulgarian Posts’ clients can subscribe online on a dedicated website: [http://www.abo.bgpost.bg/](http://www.abo.bgpost.bg/);

Bulgarian Posts Plc offer a track and trace service for domestic and international items.
Trends:

- Automation of the most postal operations and processes;
- Widening of the scope of services for bigger customers via the virtual private network of the company;
- Offering web based services;
- Widening the e-commerce services.
Digital training of the personnel

• The company provides mainly trainings for its operational purposes - In 2013 the training in the company concerned mainly the postal exploitation – 9356 trainings in 2016 (5586 – in 2015), including for new software and IT incl. 20 – for information technologies.

• The Trade union Federation of communications is organizing a training of its leaders of the trade union organizations all over the country – 153 persons. A part of the syndicate issues, a lecture “4th Industrial revolutions and impact on postal services is foreseen. Will present “best practices” for digitalization incl. from this workshop.
Thank you for your attention!

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