

Participation of Central and Eastern countries in rural development

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- *Social dialogue will contribute to the reinforcement of associative structures so that they are able to participate fully in the areas of competence assigned by the Treaty.*

In 2002/2003, CEETTAR implemented its first information and training initiative, entitled “Social dialogue for the further integration of the European dimension”, on the application of the pre-accession strategy and assistance available to facilitate implementation of Community acquis.

In fact, the role of employer organisations and trade unions in the Member States remains relatively limited. The tripartite structures are frequently quite formal, while bipartite dialogue between employers and trade unions is under-developed. Links between the state and both of these groups are still characterised by a centralistic approach.

Despite incentives from the Commission and the progress achieved, national administrations still too often confine themselves to a passive role and little information from European sources is channelled to the field. This threatens the successful accession of the relevant countries and their economic and social cohesion.

The CEETTAR project, now extended to include 6 countries (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary and Slovakia), was thus based on three key focuses:

- Social democracy,
- Agricultural economic structures,
- The harmonious integration into Europe of the new Member States.

Objectives of the initiative:

- To make further progress towards the development of expertise in the socio-professional organisations.
- To obtain additional funding in order to support organisations and civil society in the development of social democracy objectives, reinforcement of economic structures and harmonious integration into the European Union.
- Social dialogue will have to contribute to the reinforcement of associative structures in order to enable organisations to participate fully in the areas of competence assigned to the social partners by the Treaty.

- To demonstrate through this initiative that CEETTAR will need to develop further training and information projects in order to further improve the qualification of agricultural contractors.

CONCLUSION

- The restructuring and modernisation of agricultural structures represent an immediate challenge for Central and Eastern European Countries, where the agricultural population is often very high.
- Competitive pressures and the effects of globalisation threaten the existence of many small businesses, most of which are under-productive.
- Surviving businesses will have to adopt Community standards for the use of agricultural machinery for inputs, plant health/safety products, etc. It will be vital for them to modernise their equipment, work organisation and marketing methods.
- Accompanying policies (professional training, off-farm employment, rural services) will be indispensable.
- At social level, an enormous effort will have to be made in order to adopt and effectively implement Community acquis. All of this forms part of an ambitious calendar and coincides with the far-reaching process of reform, in which EU agriculture is involved.
- Sectorial social dialogue represents a particularly effective level of action due to its proximity to the relevant sectors and citizens.
- Agricultural, rural and forestry contractors in the candidate countries must play an intensive role in the agricultural sector, while having to catch up in terms of technology and facing specific legislative and regulatory obstacles.