
Corporate Support; *Educational Change; Educational Development; Foreign Countries; *Free Enterprise System; *Job Training; National Organizations; Postsecondary Education; Private Financial Support; *Private Sector; *School Business Relationship; Secondary Education; Tables (Data); Unions; *Vocational Education

ABSTRACT

Subgroup B of the European Training Foundation's (ETF) Advisory Forum analyzed the role of the private sector in vocational education and training (VET) and focused on the role of the social partners in the transition process. A questionnaire on the role of social partners in the development of training in market economy was sent to 110 individuals; 43 responded. Results indicated that few national organizations dealt with VET and allowed social partners to contribute to shaping training policy. In most countries, laws regulated the operation of tripartite organizations. In half of the countries, regional bodies complemented the work of national committees; in the other half, such bodies did not exist. National and regional bodies were involved in policy making, counsel, and strategy creation. The emergence of social partnership was occurring in an unfavorable context of economic crisis and structural transformation. All the partner countries pointed out the difficulty encountered by employer organizations and employee trade unions in forming autonomous, representative forces. Tripartism was the emerging form of social regulation in the current transition phase. These action proposals were made to the ETF: observe, register, and analyze countries' initiatives; convince political deciders of the importance of social dialogue regarding VET; provide technical support; and involve social players in the European Union's Leonardo projects. (Appendixes include the instrument and tables and graphs.) (YLB)
Advisory Forum Meeting
12-14 June 1996

Subgroup B: The role of the social partners in the development of training in market economy

Chairman: A. Benedek
Expert: J-M. Luttringer
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The role of the social partners
in the development of training in market economy

INTRODUCTION

1. Subgroup B is charged with analysing the role of the private sector in VET. Given the importance of the subject, it was decided to focus the reflection and the action proposals on the role of the social partners in the transition process.

The work carried out by the sub-group at the seminar, held in Budapest from 23 to 25 February, showed both the relevance of this choice and the extent of the work to be accomplished in order to create the conditions for the effective involvement of social partners in the strategic fields of VET.

The sub-group was also invited to reflect on management training. The importance of the theme “Social dialogue and training”, as well as the complexity and diversity of the underlying questions, did not allow it time to deal with these two very different themes in-depth. The subgroup therefore focused its reflection on the theme of Social dialogue and training. It did so by studying both the experiences of the European Union member countries and those of the partner countries. The exchanges between participants, and the action proposals resulting from these, mainly concern the partner countries alone.

2. According to the representatives of the European Union member countries, Social dialogue on the subject of training is a reality. It does, however, express itself in a variety of forms. The key issues are well known. How to organise access to training for everyone during the entire life of a person? How to finance it and how to recognise the acquired skills?

The issues raise a large number of legal, financial and organisational questions, for which the European Union member countries find solutions that derive from their own cultures. The diversity of the legal and organisational solutions is a function of the centralised or decentralised organisation of the State, of the power of the employees' trade union organisations, of the degree of autonomy of the social partners vis à vis the State, and of the borders and links between initial and continuing training. However, in a great majority of countries, an active involvement of the social partners in the regulation of this area is deemed necessary, whether at company level, professional branch level or interprofessional level.

3. Social dialogue on the subject of VET is also established at the level of the European Union.

Through the Rome treaty and the Maastricht treaty, the European social partners have effectively covered the ground which stretches between simple recognition and the institutionalisation of their role.
In the meantime, the European social partners have won the right to sit on the committees of several European consulting bodies, and taken part in experimental exchanges and negotiations at community level, which has resulted in, on the one hand, the common opinions elaborated in the framework of Social dialogue and, on the other hand, the Agreement of October 31, 1991 about the future of the community's social policy, which figures in the social Protocol appendix of the European Union Treaty.

The actors in this dialogue recognised by the European Commission are the UNICE (Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe), the CEEP (European Centre of Enterprises with public Participation) and the ETUC (European Trade Union Confederation).

Seven “Common opinions” on the subjects of education and training were decided upon by the social partners. Sectorial Social dialogue also tackled this issue (retail trade and industrial cleaning).

The Common opinions on education and training deal with the following subjects:

- Basic education, initial training and vocational training of adults (1990);
- The transition between school and adult and professional life (1990);
- The methods likely to give the broadest possible effective access to training (1991);
- Professional qualifications and their validation (1992);
- Women and training (1993);
- The future actions of the European Union in the field of vocational training and the function of social partners in this field (1994);
- The contribution of vocational training in the fight against unemployment (1995).

4. The starting positions of the partner countries of the ETF, from which to reach the same degree of social partner involvement in the development of vocational training, are radically different. First of all, the very existence and representativity of social partners poses a problem in the current transition phase towards a market economy. When they do exist, their autonomy vis à vis the State is not always guaranteed. Their ability to deal with the issues relating to vocational training cannot always be taken for granted and pre-supposes a technical and specific culture, while other issues deemed more urgent are on the agenda (jobs, purchasing power, welfare protection...). The technical co-operation programmes relating to training have not always given Social dialogue the importance its strategic significance warrants.

5. Faced with these facts, obtained through observation within the European Union and in the partner countries, subgroup B, whose task it is to formulate propositions as to the action of the ETF in this field, adopted the following work method to reach the target set:

- A survey by questionnaire on the reality of the reforms in Social dialogue regarding VET in the partner countries (Part I.).
- Presentation by the Budapest seminar participants of the trends observed in the country of origin and common reflection on the diagnosis of the situation in the partner countries (Part II.).
- Finally, propositions for the action of the ETF (Part III.).
PART I. STATE OF THE ISSUE IN THE PARTNER COUNTRIES: MAIN FINDINGS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE

The institutionalisation of social partnership is a fairly new phenomenon in Eastern European countries facing the problems of socio-economic transformation. The tripartite forms of cooperation dealing with the world of labour in a comprehensive way are also undergoing a transformation process, especially the institutional form of interest reconciliation in relation to vocational training, which does not have a long history. This is mainly due to the fact that the management and institutional system of vocational training in these countries followed a one-way institutionalisation. In the past decades, the State had a dominant role to play and socio-economic movements were not reflected in the essential features of social partnership. The institutions of interest reconciliation concerning the world of labour partly based on participation, partly on the classical negotiations on wages and working conditions, formally exist. The participants representing the interests of trade unions have, however, changed significantly and - according to a number of opinions - have also weakened. It is particularly conspicuous how slow and contradictory the formation of the representation of employers' interests is in the countries of this region. In spite of the fact that the institutional form of social partnership in vocational training does not have a long history, the processes observed in this region indicate that there is increasing awareness of the strategic importance of the participation of social partners. This opportunity should be taken particularly seriously if the countries concerned are to make efforts in order to establish an effective vocational training system, which can be successful under the conditions of a modern market economy.

The first draft of the Questionnaire on "The role of social partners in the development of training in market economy" was prepared in September 1995 and it was commented by the members of Subgroup B. The final version, which was approved also by ETF, was submitted to the meeting of the Governing Board in Torino on 1 December.

The Questionnaire was sent out to the 83 members of the Advisory Forum, 15 EU member States, 11 Phare countries, 11 Tacis countries and 9 international organisations. ETF sent around 27 Questionnaires directly to a number of social partners in the partner States. Questionnaires were sent out to altogether 110 recipients.

By 15 February 1996, we received 43 filled out Questionnaires: 17 from EU member States, 22 from Phare countries, 2 from Tacis countries, and 2 from international organisations, in particular from ILO and from ENEL, which included data relating to Italy. In the course of evaluation, we compared 23 countries (Supp. 1). If we had more than one respondent from a particular country, we considered the most characteristic answers. The Questionnaire was returned to us from individual countries by representatives of various organisations (Supp. 2).

The respondents in EU member States were mostly representatives of government organisations (from Germany and Denmark we have three respondents each). From Sweden both a governmental and a trade union organisation responded and from Great Britain all three sides returned the Questionnaire. Concerning the Phare countries, we received governmental and trade union answers from Estonia, governmental and employer responses from Lithuania, trade union and employer responses from Hungary, and all three sides returned the Questionnaires from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Latvia.

The evaluation focused on the analysis of the situation in the Phare countries.
Item 1 deals with the role of tripartite organisations in VET.

Question 1. Regarded whether there are national organisations, bodies dealing with VET, which give a chance to social partners to contribute to the shaping of training policy. Figure 1.1.A. depicts the situation in member States and in Phare countries, Figure 1.1.B. shows the breakdown of the complete evaluation (23 countries). Question 1.2. regarded the date of the establishment of such organisations, if the answer to the first question was yes. Figure 1.2. shows the development of events in time. We received various answers to question 1.3. In general, the consulting role of the organisations was underlined.

Items 2 deals with the legal background.

In most of the countries (56%), the operation of tripartite organisations are regulated by law. The key parts of regulations are: objective, programmes, finances (Table 2.2.). In the Phare countries, the relevant regulation concerning these organisations came into force in 1991-1995. Question 2.4. deals with the issue of who is entitled to make decisions to change the composition and the rules of operation of organisations. According to the answers, such decision-making bodies are the Parliament (27%), the bodies themselves (14%), or no answer was given (32%).

Items 3 deals with the analysis of regional level.

In around 50% of the countries, regional bodies complement the work of national committees. In the remaining 50% such bodies do not exist.

Item 4 deals with the composition of bodies.

Unfortunately, many did not answer this question. However, the operation of 3-4 sided organisations can be considered as characteristic. Mostly, the government, the trade unions and the employers are involved. In some cases, the chambers also take part.

Item 5 deals with the role and competence of the bodies.

High priority was given to policy making, counsel and the creation of strategy. Such were followed by preparation of laws, monitoring, decision-making, collection of information and allocation of financial resources. Accreditation was mentioned only in 4 cases.

Item 6 deals with decision-making.

Around half of the respondents make decisions with majority vote, the other half with consensus. In most cases, the topic will be discussed again (31%) if there is a disagreement.

Items 7 deals with the issues of operation.

Figure 7.1. on the frequency of meetings shows the various practices in different countries. We received a lot of practical information and addresses of secretariats. The expenses of the secretariats are usually borne by the State. In two cases, Estonia and France, the secretariat is supported by the State, the employers and the workers.
**Item 8 deals with the regular evaluation of the work.**

In 7 cases there is. In 7 cases, there isn't any The breakdown is shown on Figure 8.

*Question 9 was answered only in a few cases, unfortunately.*

As a number of qualified workers are available for the transformation process, entrepreneurs do not often arrange for further training. Companies frequently conclude agreements with schools, for the purpose of either organising practical training or training managers or training experts for new professional areas needed by the labour market, such as logistics.

The formation of the private sector and the development of social partnership are closely related processes, as it is shown by the 1995 sub-group analysis. The relationship between the vocational training system and privatisation is very close: the transformation of the vocational training system and the appearance of new forms of training, which are connected to the actual labour market and contribute to the formation of a more effective vocational training system, are very closely connected to the implementation of the privatisation process. This also has an impact on the institution of social partnership. Such new institutions were established more quickly in those countries where the interests of employers were represented more strongly in the course of the privatisation process and the interests of employees could be reconciled with the interest of employers via an appropriate framework. This relationship has drawn our attention to the fact that when analysing the functions, advantages and disadvantages of the institution of social partnership, its connection to privatisation may not be disregarded.

Although the classical form of interest reconciliation is tripartite, in the case of vocational training, it develops into a reconciliation process with many functions, involving a number of partners. While classical interest reconciliation related to the world of labour is primarily aimed at wage negotiations, collective agreements, the settlement of labour law issues, the creation of regulations concerning working conditions and their main goal is to ensure work peace, social partnership relating to vocational training may not be restricted to employers and employees due to its specific nature, as it is designed to develop the working culture of the young generation and is closely connected to the process of preparing for work those who have not been employed yet. The range of partners is much wider, as the process involves the interests of training institutes, the participants of youth training and education, as well as the interest of parents, who take the most immediate responsibility for the young generation. This multi-function system, which has created bodies of interest reconciliation even in western countries, has only recently begun to take effect in the countries of Eastern Europe, which are under transformation. This makes it necessary to clarify the relation of these new bodies to the classical tripartite form of interest reconciliation and determine the kind of co-operation and differentiation that is characteristic of such reconciliation processes.
PART II.: EXCHANGES BETWEEN THE PARTICIPANTS AT THE SEMINAR: TRENDS – ISSUES

The debates focused both on the interpretation of the changes observed in the partner countries and on the East-West comparison based on the national situations presented by the representatives of the European Union member countries.

1. It was first stressed that:
   
   * the emergence of social partnership is taking place in an unfavourable context of economic crisis and structural transformation;
   
   * the constant development of social differentiation leads to the development of a more diversified social structure and the appearance of a multitude of diversified interests. This has an important effect and provokes the relative lack of consolidation of the organisational structures of social partners;
   
   * the access to the highly competitive 'market' of representation of interests is hardly regulated (absence of framework regulations on representativity).

In that context, the transition from an administered economy towards a market economy could not be carried out instantaneously, but corresponded to a more or less long and difficult transition process depending on the situation particular to each country. In such a transition phase the only certain or stable thing was the very principle of change and the speed at which it came about. The risk of diversity in national responses, which the speed of these evolutions causes, must not be seen as a problem. It is an inevitable reality which can be controlled when the solutions opted for are anchored in commonly-held values and principles. These principles are known as far as the role of social partners and Social dialogue in a market economy are concerned: pluralism is a guarantee of efficacy and democracy, the autonomous players of civil society must be able to counterbalance the weight of the State. These principles apply to the role of the social partners on the subject of vocational training.

2. However, all the partner countries present pointed out the difficulty encountered by employers organisations and employees trade unions in forming autonomous forces, which are representative, and possess clear skills and the ability to assume them, particularly in the fields of VET. The process by which employers and workers organisations are formed is not the same, and does not encounter the same hurdles in both cases.

   a) By definition, employers' groups did not exist in the former social organisation. In the new market economy context they must therefore be "invented". The task is not an easy one, though. The problems to be resolved are economic and organisational. The number of private employers depends on the progress made in the State-owned company privatisation process, but also on the creation of new private concerns. However, even in the countries where the private sector is developing, employers' organisations are not yet enjoying the desired representativity. Small employers are devoting their energy to the running of their firms and the competition in the marketplace, and are not very available for the tasks of general regulation of the labour market and training within employers' organisations. As for the directors of State concerns, of which there are still many, their independence from the State and the union organisations in the company is too weak for them to play a decisive role in
autonomous employers' organisations. For lack of autonomous and representative employers' organisations, some countries have chosen to make belonging to chambers of commerce compulsory for employers, and to give them prerogatives on the subject of VET. This choice, dictated by the imperatives of the transition phase, seems not to be, however, in conformity with the orientations of the International Labour Organisation.

b) As for the employees' trade unions, the problem is not one of "inventing" them but changing them, of political action towards economic and social action and the question of their representativity. It must be noted that there has been a considerable increase in the number of trade unions at different levels due to the creation of new ones or to the splitting of existing ones. The rate of union membership is tending to drop, though it remains high in the state sector. In the private sector, especially in small companies, their influence is very weak. The same applies to large private foreign capital businesses. Only the existence of private sector employers' organisations may give meaning to the economic and social action of the employees' trade unions and lead to their grouping together and representativity in their respective professional sectors.

c) With respect to this situation, the question was raised whether, confronted with the urgency of the reforms to be undertaken in the field of VET, it was worth waiting for the social partners to be created and capable of solving the problems that exist, or whether it would not be better to carry out the reforms without them. A serious question, to which the reply came that necessity knows no law, but that vocational training was an excellent area in which social partners - if their legal competence was recognised and their technical competence supported - could very well learn both Social dialogue and facilitate the training reforms within tripartite bodies.

3. Tripartism

Tripartism is the emerging form of social regulation in the current transition phase in the partner countries. When the social partners lack autonomy, Social dialogue is organised with three parties, under the aegis of the State. The VET reform finds a favourable environment in such bodies, as the State is and remains in any event a key player in this field, which in no country is entirely in private hands. Most of the participants mentioned the creation, either some time ago or more recently, of tripartite Social dialogue bodies concerned with training. The question of the representativity of social partners, mentioned above, remains even though it is not such a burning issue. What is more, the risk of increased state-control is present, as well as the sensitivity of tripartite bodies to political ups and downs rather than economic or social ones.

4. The various forms of Social dialogue on the subject of training within companies, between the employer and the employees' representatives, were hardly dealt with during the seminar. However, they are not absent according to some participants, and deserve to be supported. In particular, support in the elaboration of a training plan for the personnel was mentioned, along with the funding of training by companies and the organisation of alternance training, which combines productive work and general training.

5. As for the themes of Social dialogue on the subject of training, they are varied and concern the priorities, the programmes, the methods and the organisation of the training apparatus... In the course of the exchanges, the question of financing was given special attention. Some of the partner countries have committed themselves to setting up funds, financed by
contributions from companies. The resources and their distribution could become a structuring element in the Social dialogue, because of the tangible stakes they represent.
PART III.: RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE ACTION THE ETF

The exchanges at the Budapest seminar made it possible to identify the guiding principles of the action to be undertaken in this field as well as some action proposals.

A. Guiding principles

1. The social partners in the partner countries are in search of identity and representativity. They are coming to grips with negotiation in a pluralist society. VET is but one field of action among many, and it is not always a priority. What is more, other actors are can legitimately intervene in this field: the State, parents, student associations, training suppliers, the management in a company. The action of the ETF must therefore be guided by wisdom and modesty, as, if training finds a more and more significant place in the system of industrial relations, in particular through unemployment prevention strategies, social dialogue on the subject of training is not the only issue of social dialogue. It is the result of the evolutions that have come about outside its specific area. The ETF should therefore observe the changes which mark a step forward in the Social dialogue and in general in the partner countries to facilitate their extension to the specific area of VET.

2. Recognition, albeit solemn, of a generic competency on the part of the social partners to intervene through Social dialogue in the field of VET is not enough. This competency must be embedded into the legal systems of the partner countries (Employment Act, law governing vocational training, law on funding systems...). Defining a legal framework for the action of the social partners will contribute to making it possible and efficient. It will make it easier the co-operation between the Education Ministry and the Labour Ministry.

3. All the partner countries do not offer equally favourable conditions for starting willful Social dialogue actions on the subject of VET. The history, size and social and economic fabric of the countries must be taken into consideration. The ETF plan of actions will also have to take these elements into account (Phare countries and Tacis countries).

4. Observation of the evolutions which the partner countries are going through in this area is indispensable, as reforms follow reforms with such speed that change itself becomes the only certainty. However, this observation must be oriented towards action, which, itself, must be pragmatic. New initiatives must be registered as they emerge, they must be rendered in their context, developed, and knowledge of them must be disseminated.

B. Action proposals

1. Observe register and analyse the partner countries' initiatives.
   - The observatories set up by the ETF could be charged with this specific mission.
   - Short national monographs on the role of social partners in the field of VET should be put together with the help of professional relations systems experts (Employment law, collective negotiation, social players...).
   - Case studies presenting the initiatives – either tried and tested or innovative – could be produced and disseminated.
2. Convince the political deciders of the importance of Social dialogue regarding VET.

   - Generate sensitiveness to the issue through a seminar or study mission on the practices of the European Union member countries in this field for the high-level deciders.
   - Valorisation of the initiatives registered in the partner countries by publishing case studies (new practices).
   - Expertise mission designed to enter the “competence” of social partners into the legal and financial systems of the partner countries.

3. Provide technical and methodological support for the social partners who commit themselves in this direction.

   - For the countries with some acquired skills in this field through East-East or West-East co-operation programmes, aiming at enhancing the “transferability” of significant experiments e.g. the planning of training in the company as a subject of Social dialogue, the setting of State diploma or qualification certificate pass criteria, funding sources and techniques, alternance training, the position of the private and public sectors in training.
   - Propose the representatives of employers and employees’ organisations study visits to European Union organisations.
   - Supply the social players with the case-study book about Social dialogue practices in the training field.

4. Involve social players from the partner countries in “Leonardo” projects set up by European Union social partners.

   This involvement could be arranged informally at first. There are in fact between 40 and 50 LEONARDO projects being carried out by social partners.

   Some of these could welcome a “visiting guest” from one of the partner countries.
PART IV.: ANNEXES
QUESTIONNAIRE “SOCIAL PARTNERS IN VET” – COMPARATIVE EXAMINATION

1. Tripartite organisations in VET

1) Are they any national organisations/bodies dealing partly or exclusively with VET, that give a chance to social partners (the governmental, the employers and the employees sides) to contribute to the shaping of training policy?

   YES  NO

2) If YES, when had the first such organisation(s) been established, what was its (or their) name(s) and the composition? What main organisation(s) exist today? What are their tasks?

3) What major objectives had been set at the time of their establishment? (Please separate answer for each!)

4) Was any changes of aim and mission after the establishment? Why?
2. Legislation

1) Is there establishment/operation regulated by law, order, agreement or contract? (Please separate answer for each!)

[YES] [NO]

If YES, please indicate what type:

Law  Order  Agreement  Contract  Others

2) What are the key parts of this regulation: (you can indicate more than one)

Objective  Programmes  State help  Mission  Area  Finances  Others

3) When did the relevant regulation concerning this (these) organisation(s) come into force?

Date:

Was it changed since the creation? Why?

4) Who is entitled to make decisions concerning the composition or organisation(s), its rules of operation and changes in mission?
3. Levels of operation of organisation(s)/body(ies)

1) National committees/council only?
   
   YES    NO

2) Regional/local bodies as well?
   
   YES    NO

3) If YES, how is the work distributed among the various levels? By who?

4) Please specify the structure and the connection of national, regional organisations.

4. Composition of bodies

1) Number of parties
   
   2    3    4    More:

   Please specify the parties:
2) How many organisations does one party represent?

3) Numbers of members of each bodies?

4) Member delegation/selection/duration of mandate procedures?

5. Role and competence of the bodies/organisation

1) Please indicate for each the appropriate function(s) (you can indicate more than one)

- Policy making
- Decision-making
- Counsel
- Allocation of funds or financial resources/evaluation and control
- Preparation of laws/bills
- Right of agreement
- Controlling/monitoring
- Creation of conception and strategy
- Collection/distribution information
- Other, namely

6. Decision-making

1) The decision-making procedure

- Majority of votes
- Absolute
- Relative
- Majority of votes by sides
- Consensus
2) What happens, if there is no agreement?

   Re-negotiation
   Rejection
   Re-negotiation after amendment
   President vote counts double
   Other:

7. Operation

1) Frequency of the meetings?

   Bi-Weekly (every second week)
   Monthly
   Bi-monthly (six time a year)
   Quarterly
   Half-yearly
   Yearly
   Else:

2) Is there any permanent administrative help, e.g. technical support, regional network, secretariat, for the organisation and preparation of the meeting?

   [ ] YES  [ ] NO

3) If YES, what are its parameters?

   Name of secretariat:
   Name of the head of secretariat:
   Address:
   Telephone:
   Fax:

4) Which is the structure of payment of administration (secretariat)

   State
   Social partners
   Employers
   Tripartite funding
   Other:

5) Provider of the budget of operation:
6) Annual budget (in ECU):

8. Evaluation

1) Is there a regular evaluation of its work?

   YES   NO

2) If YES, done by who?

9. Other

Any other proposal relating to the role and task of social partners in VET?
RESULTS OF THE QUESTIONNAIRE ON SOCIAL PARTNERS

Supp. 1.

Country and Abbreviations

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### Consistency of Answers

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Question 1.1.A.
Are there any national organisations/bodies dealing partly or exclusively with VET, that give a chance to social partners to contribute to the shaping of training policy?

European Union

Yes 91%

No 9%

Countries of Central and Eastern Europe

Yes 67%

No 33%
Question 1.1.B.
Are there any national organisations/bodies dealing partly or exclusively with VET, that give a chance to social partners to contribute to the shaping of training policy?

Yes  60%
Lack of dates  20%
No  20%
Question 1.2.

If YES, when had the first such organisation(s) been established, what was its (or their) name(s) and the composition?
**Question 2.2.**

*What are the key parts of this regulation?*

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Question 5.1.
Please indicate for each the appropriate function(s)

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<td>Preparation of laws/bills</td>
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<tr>
<td>Controlling/monitoring</td>
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<td>Creation of conception and strategy</td>
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<td>Collection/distribution information</td>
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<td>Validation/accreditation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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Question 6.2.
What happens, if there is no agreement?

- Lack of dates: 34%
- Re-negotiation: 31%
- Rejection: 12%
- Re-negotiation after amendment: 8%
- Other: 15%
- President vote counts double: 0%
Question 7.1.
Frequency of the meetings?

- Lack of dates: 27%
- Monthly: 14%
- Quarterly: 23%
- Else: 36%
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