

## Report

11-12. April 2011

The objective of the meeting was that the organisations participating in the project analyse the operation of the EWCs and other participatory bodies (national or group-level forums, works councils, working committees) and identify the possibility of creating networks with mandates from the national EWC coordinators maintained by the trade unions.

The first speaker, **Christian Nickel**, HR director of EDF emphasized the importance of social dialogue being part of the company social policy. Priorities of EDF are: competence development, working conditions, sustainable development and being part of the common corporate culture. Social dialogue is a key element of the factors of success.

The role of the EWC is to promote the internal information network of the group. It should go beyond the analyses of areas directly linked to work, like the consolidated balance sheet, and discuss the impacts of e.g. the catastrophe in Japan. In case of reorganisation or acquisition the EWC can facilitate a joint work between management and workers representatives on serious problems like asbestos or stress management.

The EWC does not have any other functions, he warned. European Works Council meetings must not be about social bargaining! The social negotiations and bargaining is responsibility of local bodies. Special negotiating bodies must be established but also separated from the EWC. The EWC should not discuss issues that are not linked to the management of the company. It should not take the role of the local management or other forums, either. It should also be noted that the information passed on to the EWC is confidential – as Mr Nickel summarised the expectations of EDF.

**Laurence Hoeffling**, EWC secretary of EDF and representative of CGT explained that the main task of the EWC is project development or restructuring. The task of the trade union on the other hand is to react and make the group accept social values. The improvement of corporate culture and the adaptation to change is important, but we need to exert counter-effort and guarantee the social rights of employees.

The afternoon session was introduced by the presentation of **László Neumann**, expert. He explained that many countries in Europe use structural changes to increase their competitiveness. This has an impact on social dialogue and working conditions. Not only economic changes should be managed but also: 1. their projection, 2. the preparation for managing change and 3. the change management. The European Union underlines the participation of employees in this process. This was followed by a discussion.

At the end of the day **László Kozák** presented the results of two surveys on the information systems of EWCs. One of surveys was made by the Dublin Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, the other one by ÉTOSZ. As part of the project experts ask the EWC members to fill in forms on the cooperation within European works councils.

On the second day, the **Catherine Calmettes** (FO) gave a presentation on the recast of the directive. She explained that France is delayed with the transposition. There are two possibilities to transpose the directive: by passing an act or regulation, i.e. through the involvement of the chambers outside parliament, or by the announcement by the government after an authorisation received from parliament. A dialogue was started with the minister of labour but the employers (MEDEF) are lobbying for a more flexible regulation. The recitals reflect the spirit of the directive itself. Recital 14. is connected to adaptation and recital 13 to the role of implementation. Consultation in the

directive is not formal but means the involvement of employees.

The speaker continued with the introduction of the ETUC guidelines on the applicability of the new directive and then discussed the role of experts and the European TU federations. These may be involved into the negotiations, he explained. National regulations can define the financial frame of the operation of EWCs. Confidentiality is an important aspect for multinationals in connection with the operation of the EWC, and what use if you can go to the meeting but all you hear is classified information?

The next speaker was **Didier Baur**, who presented the activities of sectoral dialogue committees and the forums of social dialogue at the European level. It is very important, he said, that the committees are present at the groups active in the whole energy sector.

In the discussion, mention as made of the fact the until the present day there is no solution to the problem of trade union answers and reactions both at the European, the multinational, the national and at the company level. Information is owned by a small group who are good at transmitting the implementation of the regulations on EWCs or the EMCEF policies but cannot bring in the opinion of the trade unions into the EWC-work. Many EWC-members do their job at the national level. Furthermore, experience has shown that employee representatives are generally not involved into the preparation of decisions. Therefore the EWC members do not represent only inform the employees It is only up to the capabilities of the trade union network to have the information reach the appropriate levels. The participation of experts at the EWC meetings is important, but it is also possible for the group to involve trade unions into the EWC agreements.

We not only need follow-up but active participation. Trade unions must be cohesive at the holding level. We have to organise the flow of the opinion of the EPSU coordination back to the trade unions of the 5 countries.

At the end of the working seminar László Kozák explained that much information has been accumulated in the past period within the frame of the project which can serve as a basis for substantial work at the project conference, in Budapest

László Kozák