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PARTICIPATION & RIGHTS LETTER



WORKER'S INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION RIGHTS IN EUROPE

THE PRACTICAL EXERCISE OF INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION: EUROPEAN WORKS COUNCILS EXCHANGE THEIR PRACTICES

About 30 EWC worker representatives from all over Europe met in Brussels on October 18 and 19 for a SDA workshop to exchange their numerous practical experiences in EWCs of different sectors. This workshop was organised in the framework of the EU-funded INFOPOINT project and was related to a workshop of May 2010 aimed at trade union officials and experts on the challenges of the new EWC Directive. The objective of the latter workshop was to see how EWCs (can) exercise their current rights and how they can implement the new provisions. Focus of the workshop was to exchange EWC experiences on how they exercise their competences and coordinate information and consultation at the European and national/local level.

First, the case of UPS, showed how a EWC who was formerly dominated by management, managed to get the majority in this body thanks to the cooperation of the EWC union members and to the support of the European trade union federation ETF, and how it intends to improve its action basis by integrating the Recast Directive in the pending renegotiation.

The presentation of Avaya clarified how the professional use of IT and an adequate preparation of information and consultation process can be useful for workers representatives at European and national levels. The strategy of Avaya consists in optimising the use at European level of information obtained during negotiations at local level.

The examples of DHL and Vaillant (see article on page 3) made it clear that the coordination of activities at European and national/ local levels, both in large and medium-sized companies, is an important instrument for the successful implementation of workers' interests in case of restructuration.

Finally, the case of Thales showed how European framework agreements between management and EIFs in cooperation with the EWC can help define the content of a European corporate policy.

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The aim of the SDA Infopoint is to assist project promoters in preparing, launching and monitoring their transnational co-operation projects in the fields of information, consultation and participation of workers under the 04.03.03.03 budget heading of the European Commission.

INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK AGREEMENT FOR PFLEIDERER AG

Under the name of PASOC, a EWC initiative has been carried out for a year to introduce a "Pfleiderer AG Social Charter". The project is financed by the budget heading 04.03.03.03 of the European Commission and promoted by Arbeit und Leben Bielefeld. The result is an international framework agreement with far-reaching regulations for the safeguarding and development of social, labour and employment standards in the group. "We have established clear guidelines on social and employment obligations, also for the future development of Pfleiderer" said the EWC chairman Frank Bergmann "and we have created a very efficient monitoring system for the supervision of these obligations."

In view of the effects of the economic crisis on the forest products industry, the agreement contains very far-reaching provisions - including the fact of giving priority to regular employment (rather than employing agency workers), labour, health and environmental protection or the company's future orientation ("Sustainable development of the company has in principle priority over short-term profit goals").

A special feature of this initiative is that PASOC relies on information, consultation and participation. National workers' representatives and the workforce have been actively involved in the process of discussion and. Regular EWC communication, a written survey for the employees of all European sites, a European Pfleiderer hearing and the PASOC project website are elements of active information and public relations.

A high level of participation and transparency was reached. For trade unions (e.g. IG Metall, EFBWW and BHI), this project represents a "best practice" for a networked European lobbying policy.

The international (PASOC) framework agreement for Pfleiderer AG will be officially signed on 30 November 2010 at IG Metall in Frankfurt.

More information: www.innopas.eu

Contact people: Gisbert Brennecke (Arbeit und Leben Bielefeld): gb@aulbi.de

Frank Bergmann (EWC Chairman PAG): Frank.Bergmann@pfleiderer.com