

Worker Participation at Board Level

An Asset in Building up the European Social Model

Conference, 23 - 24 September 2005
Bratislava

The conference is part of the project PRESENS, conducted by the Social Development Agency asbl together with its partners:

- European Trade Union Confederation
- European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety
- Chamber of Labour Austria
- CMKOS (Czech Republic)
- General Workers Union (Malta)
- Hans Böckler Foundation (Germany)
- Lo-skolen (Denmark)
- MSZOSZ (Hungary)
- KOZ SR (Slovak Republic)
- Solidarnosc (Poland).



More information:
<http://www.seeurope-network.org/homepages/seeurope/presens.html>



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Project title: Prospects for board-level representation of workers under the European Company Statute in the new EU member states

The right of employees to nominate representatives to the Board of Directors or to the Supervisory Board currently exists in 18 of the 25 EU member states. Though the extent of this right and its specific characteristics differ a great deal from country to country, it is obvious that in many EU member states statutory participation rights at board level constitute an essential element of the national corporate governance system. Via these representatives workers gain access to information and influence at the place where decisions of strategic importance for the company are taken or endorsed. This representation at board level may be one additional means of ensuring that the interests of the workforce are respected, for example during restructuring processes.

With the legislation on the European Company (SE) and the European Cooperative Society (ECS), participation rights at board level become an integral part of the negotiations between management and worker representatives from different member states on the question of how workers are to be involved in company decision-making processes. Moreover, the planned EU directives on cross-border mergers (10th Directive) and on cross-border transferral of company seats (14th Directive) also make reference to the rights foreseen in the SE legislation. One of the consequences of these legislative acts will be that the information and consultation rights already well established at European level will in many cases be supplemented by internationally composed "worker delegations" on the board of directors or supervisory board. While offering new opportunities for influencing company decision-making processes, this also constitutes major challenges for worker representatives and their trade unions.

The conference aims to promote the idea of worker participation at board level in transnational companies such as the European Company (SE). It will bring together experts, practitioners, trade union officials and political decision-makers from both the EU member states and the European level to discuss the meaning and experiences of worker participation rights at transnational level and the role these can play in building up the European Social Model.

In several presentations and a panel discussion – in each case followed by joint debates – the following topics will be addressed:

- The meaning of statutory worker participation in company decision-making
- Organising effective cross-border cooperation between worker representatives and their trade unions – Existing experiences from different sectors
- Worker board-level representation – a snapshot. First findings of a nine-country survey
- Enabling worker board-level representatives to play their role – Training of worker representatives in Austria and Denmark
- Panel discussion: How does worker participation contribute to the achievement of Social Europe?

Interpretation (active and passive) will be available in English, Slovak / Czech, Polish, Russian, Slovenian, and Hungarian.



FRIDAY, 23 SEPTEMBER 2005

10.00 – 10.30 **Welcome - Coffee and Tea**

10.30 – 11.00 **Introducing remarks**

Ivan Saktor (President KOZ SR)

Ludo Vekemans (Director SDA)

11.00 – 12.30 **The meaning of statutory worker participation in company decision-making**

Prof. Stanislaw Rudolf (University of Lodz)

Presentation followed by debate

12.30 – 14.30 **Lunch**

Organising effective cross-border cooperation between worker representatives and their trade unions – Existing experiences from different sectors

Chair: Michael Stollt (SDA)

All presentations are followed by a debate.

14.30 – 15.30 **Worker participation in Central and Eastern Europe and the role of European legislation – Experiences from the gas and oil company MOL**

Pavol Buday (Slovnaft trade union / member of EWC and supervisory board MOL)

Presentation followed by debate

15.30 – 16.30 **The need to agree on common demands in negotiations with the employer side – The EMF guidelines on ‘Worker involvement in the European Company (SE)’**

Luc Triangle (European Metalworkers’ Federation)

16.30 – 17.00 **Coffee & tea break**

17.00 – 18.00 **Cross-border cooperation at board level between trade unions – NFU and its role in transforming the company Nordea into a European Company (SE)**

Rauni Söderlund (Nordea Union Board)

Per Karlberg (Confederation of the Nordic Bank, Finance and Insurance Unions, NFU)

18.00 **Dinner in a city restaurant**

SATURDAY, 24 SEPTEMBER 2005

9.00 – 10.30 **Worker board-level representation – a snapshot. First findings of a nine-country survey**

Kevin P.O. Kelly (University of Limerick)

Presentation followed by debate

Enabling worker board-level representatives to play their role – Training of worker representatives in Austria and Denmark

Walter Gagawczuk (AK Wien)

Niels Erik Thorsen (LO-skolen)

10.30 – 11.00 **Coffee & tea break**

11.00 – 12.30 **PANEL DISCUSSION:**

How does worker participation contribute to the achievement of social Europe ?

Statements from the protagonists at European level

Chair: Dr Norbert Kluge (ETUI-REHS)

❶ **The views of the Social Partners**
Reiner Hoffmann (Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC)

Dr. Gerhard Heinrich (Federation of Austrian Industry)

❷ **The views of the EU institutions**
Armando Silva (EU Commission, Head of Unit EMPL/D2)

Richard Falbr (MEP)

Concluding remarks

12.30 **Lunch**

ARRIVAL OF PARTICIPANTS:

Thu 22/09/2005 or Fri 23/09/2005

VENUE AND ACCOMMODATION (Rooms booked by SDA):

Hotel Barónka <http://www.baronka.sk/>

Mudrochova 2 - 835 27 Bratislava-Rača – Slovak Republic
Tel. (Reception) + 421 2 44 87 23 24

CONTACT FOR INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION:

Michael Stollt (Social Development Agency asbl)
mstollt@etuc.org Tel. +32 2 224 04 62

Jozefa Svirecova (KOZ SR)

svirecova@kozsr.sk Tel. +421 2 502 39 116