



*Exchange of views and experiences regarding board-level representation throughout Europe –*  
**First seminar of the PRESENS project held in Helsingør (7–9 April 2005)**

In April, the first seminar within the framework of the PRESENS project took place in Helsingør, Denmark. The seminar brought together 23 experts, practitioners and trade union officials from five new member states (Czech Republic, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Malta) and four “old” member states (Denmark, France, Germany and Sweden) to enter into a dialogue on worker participation at board level within the enlarged EU.

The presentations and discussions once more revealed the variety of systems and practices in Europe. A clear lesson drawn from the seminar is that there is indeed a need for improved knowledge and a better understanding of the national systems and particularly the practices in the different member states. The first PRESENS seminar constituted a further step in this direction, focussing particularly on exchanging practical experiences: What is the difference between being a worker board member in the Czech Republic compared to Germany? Is it more or less the same whether workers are represented on a *board of directors* (as is the case in Sweden) or on a *supervisory board* (as in Hungary)? What links are there to the other channels of interest representation? And above all: What can you achieve by sitting as a worker representative on a company board?

In this regard, the seminar showed once again how difficult it is to make qualitative comparisons between national systems. The reason for this is that board-level representation is always embedded in the wider national context of industrial relations and corporate governance. However, worker board members from all countries stressed that it is indeed a valuable additional tool of workforce interest representation. They particularly highlighted timely access to information about the company and the possibility of introducing the workers’ viewpoint at the highest level. As one Swedish practitioner put it: “Being a board member opens doors”.

#### **Upcoming PRESENS events...**

The next step within the framework of the PRESENS project will be a **second “Exchange seminar”** at which participants from the other five new member states and from four EU-15 countries will be invited to discuss participation rights and practices in their countries (**12–14 May in Gdansk, Poland**).

In **June**, a **seminar for trade union experts** from the ten new member states will be held in **Vienna (16–18 June)**. The workshop intends to provide information on and to discuss the new opportunities and challenges for worker participation created by the European Company and also by related other developments, such as the planned EU Directive on cross-border mergers.

In **September**, a **final PRESENS conference** will be held in **Bratislava** to present the outcomes of the project and to discuss various important aspects of worker participation at board level (**23–24 September**).

#### **Publications...**

All reports written by experts and practitioners from the new member states will be made available in **electronic form**. Moreover, a **10-page summary** will be translated into the languages of the new member states. Also, an **update of the existing booklet “Prospects for board-level representation under the European Company Statute”**\* will be produced within the framework of the project.

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More information about PRESENS:

<http://www.sda-asbl.org>

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

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\* The current booklet can be ordered free of charge at:

<http://www.seeurope-network.org/homepages/seeurope/europeancompany/publications.html>