

Project name	The role of employee board-level representatives in European Union enterprises: a transnational information exchange and study project
Involved organisations:	<p><u>Project Leader / Co-ordination</u> University of Limerick, Ireland</p> <p><u>European partner</u> European Trade Union Institute, Brussels</p> <p><u>National Partners (Organisations responsible for co-ordination in each country)</u></p> <p>Denmark – LO Skolen, Helsingør; Finland – Kiljava Institute / SAK; France – IRES Paris Germany – DGB Bildungswerk, Hattingen; Greece – Greek Worker Directors' Group / POSYME (Public Sector Employees' Union Federation); Hungary – MSZOSZ, National Confederation of Trade Unions; Ireland – University of Limerick / Irish Worker Directors' Group / Irish Congress of Trade Unions Malta – Workers' Participation Development Centre, University of Malta; The Netherlands – SBI Training and Consultancy</p>
financing:	Funded by European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs (B3-4003) up to 80% of cost of project
duration :	2004-2006
description :	<p>With the adoption of the Regulation for a European Company Statute and the accompanying Directive, the issue of employees having representatives on the boards of the enterprises in which they work has become an important element in the debate on employee involvement in the EU. Representation at this level is important for the opportunity it provides to the workforce to influence policy-making and the business strategy of the company, to protect jobs and to contribute to the implementation of the European Employment Strategy and the Lisbon Objectives at the enterprise level. This project aims to contribute to advancing the idea of employee board-level representatives and in contributing to the debate on this form of employee involvement.</p> <p><i>Objectives</i></p> <p>The following objectives have been agreed for this new project:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To promote transnational co-operation between board-level representatives within the EU Member States and the Acceding Countries and, through this co-operation, to develop a programme of education and training and exchange of ideas and information on the economic and social responsibilities of enterprise directors; • To undertake a research project on the roles and responsibilities of existing employee representatives at board-level and to identify the common problems and

obstacles faced by these representatives across the Member States and Acceding Countries;

- Based on the existing experiences and on the empirical research, to provide on-going education and training materials which can be a resource for present and future employee representatives on the boards of enterprises, both at national and EU-levels;
- To contribute, in a practical way, to social dialogue and workplace partnership in EU workplaces.

Three main phases:

First, the core part of the project will be a series of national workshops and transnational seminars on topics identified as important for the Europeanisation of employee involvement, in particular board-level employee representation.

Experts from the European Commission, European and national trade union and employer organisations and other relevant organisations / institutions will be invited to participate in and/or facilitate these seminars and workshops.

The topics to be address in these events might include:

- The European Commission's approach to employee information, consultation and participation through the three directives – European Works Councils; European Company Statute; and the Directive for a General Framework for Information and Consultation in European enterprises;
- The relevance of the Charter of Fundamental Rights to employment relations;
- Systems of corporate governance in the EU and the role and duties of enterprise boards in national systems and in a future European company (SE);
- The legal and social responsibilities of enterprise directors – EU and national approaches;
- Financial issues, including the role of financial participation in European enterprises;
- The obligation of confidentiality and information disclosure – the dilemma for employee representatives;
- The challenge of balancing workplace employment levels with the competitiveness of the enterprise in global markets and the Europeanisation of business sectors;
- The challenge of flexibility – contract flexibility; working time flexibility; numerical flexibility; functional flexibility;
- Corporate social responsibility and the role of board-level employee representatives in fostering good relationships between internal and external stakeholders;
- Privatisation and the future of the State-owned sector within the EU;
- Transition in the Central and Eastern European countries

	<p>and the introduction of new forms of corporate governance.</p> <p><u>Second</u>, a research project will be undertaken by way of an agreed questionnaire sent to all board-level employee representatives in the nine participating countries. The questionnaire will focus on such issues as the role of board-level employee representatives, relations with other board members and company directors, with management and with the trade unions, both within the enterprise and nationally. Other issues which might be addressed include the availability of time, resources and training to help in carrying out their responsibilities, perceived attitude of the enterprise workforce and the relations with works councils and other representative fora within the enterprise. In analysing the responses to the questionnaire, the research will try to identify aspects of the work of enterprise boards which work well and also the problems and barriers to undertaking their duties, that are common across the Member States and Acceding Countries. The findings from this study will provide useful data on a range of topics which can contribute to the discussions in the transnational seminars.</p> <p><u>Third</u>, resulting from the project, reports will be prepared on each seminar, highlighting the key outcomes, problems identified and solutions proposed. Documentation will also be prepared, based on the results of the research module and the outcome of the seminars, which will provide inputs into further education and training programmes at a national or enterprise levels.</p> <p><u>Follow-up</u>: To complete the project, a high level EU conference, attended by key European Commission, employers and trade union representatives from the Member States, will be organised to disseminate the key findings, the problems and challenges identified and any other relevant outcomes that may be important to the future development of EU policies on social dialogue and employee involvement. An independent evaluation report of the whole project will also be presented to this conference.</p>		
Publications	<p>As a result of this project there will be a substantial number of publications, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reports of the transnational seminars on a) national systems and b) the relevant theme selected for each transnational seminar; • Analysis of the survey results; • Other relevant documentation which will provide a wealth of material and information for board-level employee representatives both in the Member States but also for any potential employee representatives on the boards of SEs. <p>It is proposed that these documents will be available, at least, in the languages of the participating Member States – DE; DK; EL; EN; FR; NL; FIN, as well as in Hungarian, to ensure maximum diffusion.</p>		
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