

Project report

SE works council of the Donata Holding SE

The SE works council of the Donata Holding SE carried out a EU-sponsored project during 2012 on the better utilization of information and consultation rights. An Internet-based reporting system for business data and key employment figures was developed.



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Communication tools as a basis for action by European employee representative bodies

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Information and communication are a particular challenge for employee representation in multinational companies. As members of European Works Councils (EWC) or SE Works Councils (SE-WC) usually meet only once or twice a year face-to-face, a key success factor for effective representation is to ensure a stable dialogue between them.

Bodies of transnational interest representation are subject to special requirements to establish a reliable cohesion and mutual trust between the various representatives and to maintain it, as partly linguistic and intercultural communication barriers need to be bridged. On the other hand, the representatives work at company sites in different countries under different conditions of action which are partially unknown to the other representatives. The cohesion and cooperation in these bodies therefore requires on the one hand a durable and reliable flow of communication between the members - even beyond the rarely held joint meetings – to build and maintain a stable and deep relationship of trust. On the other hand, a regular exchange about situations and conditions at the individual company sites is a necessary basis for a mutual understanding of the different actions of the individual representatives.

In addition to the promotion of social cohesion and thus the internal capacity to act, a regular flow of information between the European interest bodies and the various company sites is required, also as a necessary basis for external action regarding the management. The availability of current information on the development of company sites allows a profound and prompt assessment of the business situation - regardless of the details given by the management - and the proactive elaboration of strategies to promote a company development oriented at the interests of the employees.

Against this background, the SE-WC of DONATA Holding SE executed a project in 2012, which aimed to strengthen the internal communication of the SE-WC. The project had a duration of twelve months and was funded by the EU program 'Information, Consultation and Participation of Representatives of Undertakings'. Within the framework of two conferences and an intermediate work phase, the 14 members of the SE-WC coming from ten different European countries were facing the following challenges:

- ensuring a reliable communication and information flow between the sessions;
- the preparation of a systematic information transfer between the SE-WC and the individual company sites;
- to enhance knowledge of the SE-WC members about the conditions of action of the other representatives at their various locations.

In the center of the project was the joint development and implementation of a communication model that clearly and mandatorily defines which information in what form and frequency will be

forwarded to whom. This communication model also contains a regular transfer of information on the economic growth as well as the development of employment at all company sites.

The communication model, which was developed during the project, is composed of three tools:

- An agreement of rules that forms a reliable framework for the communication between the representatives. The rules take into account the following aspects:
 - Information obligations of the President of the SE-WC towards the other members of the SE-WC;
 - information obligations of the individual SE-WC members to the President;
 - information obligations of the SE-WC towards local interest groups and
 - information obligations in the event of conflicts with the management.

The corresponding agreement is annexed. The development of these rules by the members of the SE-WC was made on the basis of expert input from *Ricardo Rodriguez Contreras* on best practice models of representation in European companies, an exchange with the EWC of the AXA Group and British Telecom followed as well as a joint analysis of the consultation process within the DONATA Holding SE in the last four years.

- The creation of a questionnaire to collect relevant employment and production figures of each business unit. During the opening conference the SE-WC members identified relevant information necessary for the evaluation of the development of the different sites and tested the questionnaire by gathering all this information before the second conference and finally presented and discussed them at the conference. The questionnaire was then revised and the members of the SE Works Council agreed to carry out this survey twice a year in the future. The questionnaire can be downloaded: <http://www.euro-workscouncil.net/pdf/questionnaire.pdf>.
- As a medium for internal communication the SE-WC developed and created a website, accessible only to the SE-WC members. This Website allows the collection and exchange of documents, internal e-mail traffic and exchanges in chats and forums.

Beside the development of this integrated communication model and at the same time as part of the project the knowledge of the SE-WC members about the conditions for action in the individual countries were intensified by two expert inputs from *Werner Altmeyer* on the structures and cultures of interest representation in Western and Eastern Europe, an intercultural training by *Rolf Jäger* and especially the presentation and discussion of compiled information during the project on the situation and development of the individual company sites.

The project has proved how successful an integrated approach to strengthen transnational cooperation in a SE-WC can be, which is due in part to both expert inputs and a company-wide exchange as well as a systematic corporate exchange and on the other side to the focus on the alignment of the framework, instruments as well as media of the internal communication.

Declaration of commitment by the members of the SE works council of the DONATA Holding SE regarding the flow of information and communication between the workers' representatives

The members of the SE works council (SE-WC) of DONATA Holding SE commit themselves to the following rules regarding the dissemination of information.

The SE-WC's chairman is responsible to give information to the individual SE-WC members according to the following rules:

- The chairman has to inform the individual SE-WC members immediately about planned measures of restructuring and any other management decisions of European relevance.
- He has to inform the SE-WC members about meetings with the management before the meetings.
- He has to report about the contents of the meetings immediately after the meetings, the chairman will comment the meetings.
- The chairman has to make a commented summary of each management's statement and send it to the members of the SE-WC within two weeks after the statement is given.
- The chairman is engaged to give the other members general information about interest representation in multinational companies via the internal website.

The individual SE-WC members commit themselves to give information to the SE-WC's chairman according to the following rules:

- They have to inform the chairman about any change of the working conditions at the company sites – regardless if they are of European relevance.
- They are obliged to fill in the fact sheets with indicators regarding the development of the individual company sites and send it to the chairman twice a year.
- They are obliged to inform the chairman about every kind of rumour they hear – especially about planned outsourcings or relocations – even if these information don't affect the particular company site. Information about rumours will be given only via telephone or email. The chairman then decides about the relevance of the rumours.

The local interest representatives have to be informed by the SE-WC according to the following rules:

- The SE-WC has to inform the local interest representatives about the contents of the yearly meetings of the SE-WC and any kind of decisions of the SE-WC.
- On enquiry the SE-WC has to give information to the local interest representatives about the development of other company sites.
- The SE-WC members don't give any kind of confidential information to the local interest representatives.

In cases of conflicts with the management the SE-WC members are obliged to give information according to the following rule:

- The members of the SE-WC are obliged to inform the chairman about any conflict with the local management that is related to the work as a member of the SE-WC.