



The European Works Council – finally, no longer a paper tiger

EUCDW Press Release, Brussels, 18-12-2008

By approving the report about the European Works Council with an overwhelming majority in its plenary session on 16 December 2008 at Strasbourg, the European Parliament has ratified the new version of the corresponding Directive. One day later, the Directive was also approved by the Council. This is another big success for the European Social Model.

The debate about the review of the European Works Council Directive 94/95/EG had recently been revived, threatening to thwart the original plan of providing employees with more powers of co-decision by giving them more effective cross-border information and consultation rights in important issues. The old regulations envisage the establishment of European Works Councils in corporations that employ at least 1,000 people, provided 150 of these employees work in at least two EU member states. These bodies have the duty to inform the employees of these cross-border corporations and must be consulted by the management. The example of Nokia, however, recently demonstrated how easy it can be to exclude a European Works Council from all important decision-making processes.

The new version of the Directive has also been made possible by the EUCDW's mediation between the different interest groups. Once the member states have integrated the new Directive into their national laws, the European Works Councils will have a far wider range of options at their disposal. This will help them to build bridges between different working cultures and to overcome linguistic barriers as well as mental blocks.

It is particularly important for the EUCDW that the innovative potential of the employees – which has gone unused for so long – can now be fully exploited by the corporations in their attempts to create important values. Information and transparency are characteristics of an actively implemented Social Dialogue that is designed to provide high levels of protection and motivation for the employees and to reinforce their mutual solidarity. Social partners can only be partners if they are of roughly equal strength. If they cannot negotiate on these terms, all efforts to create a Social Europe will have been in vain.

The European Union of Christian Democratic Workers (EUCDW) is made up of 24 workers' organisations from 18 countries and is an association of the European People's Party (EPP).
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