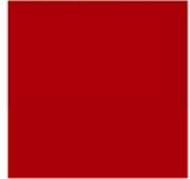


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Foreword

The coordination and the correct implementation of information and coordination procedures in worker representation instances at different levels represent core priorities for trade unions for ensuring the correct representation of workers' interests in multinational companies.

In particular, it is important to ensure proactive information procedures and meaningful consultation at EWC level: this can be done only by ensuring that such procedures at European level benefit from the outcomes of information and consultation taking place at national/local level on issues of their competence. At the same time, the new right/duty of EWC members to inform workers after an EWC meeting is meant to allow national worker representation bodies to profit from information concerning transnational matters. ICARUS project is indeed focusing on some critical steps of the coordination among different actors having a role in the representation of workers in MNCs.

INTRODUCTION

The "ICARUS Information and Consultation: Approaches of research coordinating good Union Standards" project, is the result of a broad international partnership, and has been supported by the European Union through financing programmes aimed at the implementation of activities and knowledge dedicated to social Dialogue. In particular, the theme analysed concerns the process of information and consultation of workers. The project was financed by budget line 04030303 of the European Commission, through the Directorate-General for Employment and Social Affairs.

The project developed by the European trade union ICARUS network involves both research and trade union action. The goal of the project is to combine the benefits provided by a qualitative and quantitative survey and the ability of the project promoters to implement tactics and strategies fostering the unionisation of workers in multinational enterprises. The core of the survey was thus focussed on the functioning of information and consultation processes, as well as the co-ordination of the activities of workers' representation carried out within multinational companies by trade union officers, worker delegates and members of European Works Councils.

The survey is intended to support the process of identification of good practices and of training of worker reps on knowledge of information and consultation rights, industrial relations in a transnational context and the economic and organisational nature of multinational companies, as well as on the prominent role played by these economic subjects in the global market.

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Given the above-mentioned background, the present project aims at meeting the following needs of the trade union organisation partners in the project:

- To analyse good or bad practices of reciprocal information and cooperation among workers reps in plants of multinational undertakings, EWCs members, trade union officers in charge of trade union activity connected to local plants of multinational undertakings.
- To provide specific and tailored education and training for the full and correct implementation of information and consultation rights in Community level undertakings, addressed to worker reps in local sites of MNCs, EWC delegates, trade union officers on the territory in charge of trade union activity in local sites of MNCs.
- To establish a coordinated network of trade union reps at different level, foster reciprocal trust, and profit from it in order to grant greater coordination among different level information and consultation instances and coherence of trade union action in a cross border dimension as far as worker participation is concerned.

The project intended to undertake specific actions ultimately aimed at enabling different level worker representatives to be proactive actors in a framework of improved social dialogue and industrial relations in the contexts of multinational undertakings.

Project goals

The general objective of the project is to increase and disseminate a better knowledge and understanding on Information and Consultation rights established by the European Chart of Fundamental Rights and the European Directives 2002/14/EC and 2009/38/EC, as transposed into the national laws. A deep understanding of the contents and the practical implementation of these Directives will represent the *pivot* of the analysis and activities foreseen in the framework of this project.

The project also targets the following objectives:

- upgrading trade union delegates and worker reps knowledge of the potentials provided by the new provisions of Directive 2009/38/EC, in relation with a concrete perspective
- exploring how the new elements introduced by the recast directive 38/2009/EC find application on the concrete activity of EWC members and national worker representatives - and with which related issues;
- matching the correct conditions and procedures for effectively enjoying of rights of information and consultation set up by the Directive 2002/14/EC and Directive 2009/38/EC, aimed at an efficient representation of workers' interests in multinational companies.

The political objectives of the project were:

- to strengthen the international partnership with other organisations and act on key issues for virtually all markets in the era of globalisation: the dynamics and criticalities for workers employed by companies with prominence in the national and international markets of many countries;
- to tackle the topic of information given to worker representatives by company management, its relevant use and the consultation procedures that may ensue;
- to initiate a reflection on the importance of mutual information and co-operation between the three subjects involved (EWC representatives, trade union delegates and trade unionists) on representation in a local site of a multinational company.

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Project Description

Through this project, CGIL Lombardia has promoted a 12-month working plan dedicated to the themes of information and consultation of workers in multinational companies, with a view to gathering more extensive knowledge and devising useful tools for training and trade union action on the business system of multinational groups and on the relationship of collaboration and mutual information exchange among the trade union representatives of local sites, trade union officials and the members of European Works Council (EWC).

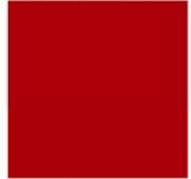
The project network

The group of European trade unions participating in the project has worked, during this 12-month period, on a networking basis. The ICARUS pilot group met five times; in Brussels, Barcelona, Bucharest, Ispra and Milan, with the participation of the ICARUS co-ordinators of all the network partners. A point of strength in the implementation of actions was undoubtedly the teamwork and cohesion that the partnership has built and maintained throughout the different steps of the ICARUS project implementation.

The following regional trade unions were involved in the partnership by CGIL Lombardia: **CFDT Rhônes Alpes (France)**, **Comisiones Obreras de Catalunya and Union General de Trabajadores de Catalunya (Spain)**, **DGB Nieder Sachsen (Germany)**, **TUC Southern and Eastern Region (United Kingdom)**, **FRATIA CNSRL (Romania)**, **CISL Lombardia (Italy)**, with the scientific support of **IRES Emilia Romagna (Italy)**.

The project co-ordination group is representative of a number of different European trade union cultures: this is a guaranteed added value, because an indirect benefit of the project is getting to know one another better and the enrichment that comes with cross-fertilisation.



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The project phases and the subjects involved

The project sets forth a number of different actions that were consistently implemented throughout the duration of the ICARUS project. They were as follows:

Quantitative survey - CGIL Lombardia has organised, in co-operation with its partners, a phase of quantitative research carried out in at least six countries of the European Union, using as a tool a closed-ended answer questionnaire:

- trade union representatives of MNC local sites,
- trade union officials competent for the site
- members of the European Works Councils.

Qualitative Survey – On the basis of the results obtained, a second phase of study – the qualitative one – was organised, i.e., the promotion of a focus group. The result was the evaluation of the dynamics of mutual information and co-operation between and among the three respondent profiles involved in the quantitative questionnaire. The goal of this experimentation is also to devise an operational tool that both workers and the trade union can utilise at different levels, duplicated and experimented by all the partner organisations in the project, that can also be fine-tuned and adjusted over time.

Training – The last phase of the project was dedicated specifically to training. A training module consisting of classroom training sessions and group work for a total of two days and a half of seminar, which could also be broken down into shorter sessions. The training module was applied to approximately 40 trade unionists from six different countries. This module was also conceived to be replicated in the different national contexts. In addition to the contents of the questionnaire, the training topics include an in-depth analysis of key issues of legal and contractual nature pertaining to industrial relations in multinational projects, unionisation strategies in a multi-cultural context, and how to face restructurings as well as industrial and manufacturing crises.

The Output

The operational tools (Survey & Trade Union Action) provided by ICARUS are:

- the set of exploratory questionnaires - a longer version for scientific research and a shorter one for trade union stakeholders for the mapping of the action context,
- the focus group methodology, useful for the qualitative survey and supporting trade union meetings aimed at the harmonisation and implementation of co-operation among the stakeholders of workers' representation in multinational companies,
- The training materials, intended for the above-mentioned stakeholders, but in a more extensive version, also destined to the processes of sensitisation to transnational trade union strategies.

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Mode of communication

On average, 92% of respondents affirm that the results of the EWC meetings are conveyed. It should be underlined, however, that 18% of worker reps state that they have not received the results of EWC meetings. This data confirms the persistence of problems with the transmission of results to all employees in all the structures of multinational companies.

When the transmission of results does occur, the ways of communicating the outcome of the EWC meetings are quite varied. The most widespread is by e-mailing minutes to worker reps. Another very common practice is to distribute them at meetings in the plant where the respondent works. Then, through the meetings between worker representation structures and EWC delegates organised at the respondent site. These are followed by the dissemination of minutes via intranet and the meetings of the national group coordination structures in which EWC delegates also participate. Then, the dissemination of results through the EWC website and the meetings of workers' representation structures with EWC delegates, which are held in all the sites of the multinational group in the respondent country. Finally, the meetings held in all the group sites in the respondent country, followed by EWC newsletters.

These results demonstrate that information and communication technologies are still underused.

The relations between EWC delegates and trade union organisations

For what concerns the relations between EWCs and trade union organisations, 56% of respondents report the presence of a trade union officer responsible for this, 30% declares that there is no reference trade unionist, and 14% do not or cannot answer this question. Among worker reps, this latter value is very high, reaching 22%. This data seems to confirm the fact that worker reps are not fully aware of some EWC activities.

The quality of the relations between EWC delegates and trade union structures reported by respondents is definitely satisfactory, with 39.6% considering these relations fully satisfactory, and 46.5 % considering them sufficiently satisfactory. 14% of respondents report, on the contrary, a more or less unsatisfactory situation, or even the absence of any relationship between EWCs and trade unions. This data indicates that 60% of respondents consider that the relationship between the two actors can be improved. Among respondents with a high level of experience, no less than 72% think that the relations between the EWC and trade unions can be improved.

In all the countries analysed there seems to be room for improvement.

This data is in line with the fact that 38% of respondents report regular relations between EWC delegates and trade union officers, whereas 15% report the absence of regular relations. It is moreover significant that 47% of respondents do not or cannot answer this question.

It can thus be inferred from this data that, on the one hand, trade union structures must still invest in support and coordination activities with EWCs. On the other hand, in the majority of cases, in which there is already an officer in charge, there nevertheless appears to be a need to make relations between EWC and trade unions more effective.



Analysis of EWC delegates' responses

The answers provided by the 79 EWC delegates indicate that the appointment of delegates mainly occurs through trade union appointment (38%), election by worker reps (31%), appointment by a representation structure (17.7%) and worker election (11%), respectively. Whereas the Italian questionnaires unduly influence ongoing trends, being higher in number, a prevalence of election of EWC delegates by worker reps is reported by German and Spanish delegates, of election by workers in the United Kingdom, and trade union appointment for France and Romania. Less marked, but definitely more significant, is the appointment of delegates of trade union origin in Italy.

Resources available to EWC delegates

In terms of the resources available to EWCs not only during meetings with management, but also between meetings, the most critical elements concern the presence of a budget for EWC activities (75% report a lack thereof), additional staff (85.6%), EWC website (62.5%), secretariat (60.6%) and training (55.8%). Elements indicated as generally more adequate concern permits (79.8%), communication via e-mail (91.3%), Internet (70.2%) and intranet access (65.4%), external experts (58.7%), access to production sites (54.8%) and the possibility of using translation services (63.5%).

Table 1: EWC Resources and rights

	Not available	Available
Secretariat	60.6	39.4
Translation	36.5	63.5
Funding	75.0	25.0
Permits	20.2	79.8
Access to production sites	45.2	54.8
External experts	41.3	58.7
E-mail	8.7	91.3
Internet	29.8	70.2
Intranet	34.6	65.4
EWC Website	62.5	37.5
Training	55.8	44.2
Additional staff	85.6	14.4

Source: Data processed by IRES Emilia-Romagna based on CGIL Lombardia data

As far as EWC functioning is concerned, it would definitely be advisable to invest more in secretarial structures – a necessary condition to guarantee EWC operation also between meetings with the management. As to the visibility of EWC activities, it also seems fundamental to make further efforts to guarantee a presence on the web through own websites. Then, if it is true that EWC functioning depends, first and foremost, on the competence available, both participation in training courses and the possibility of turning to external experts represent two resources that should certainly be used much more extensively, last but not least because they are rights established by the EU Directive.

EWCs that have turned to external experts in the past have exercised this right to ensure the presence of trade unionists during meetings with management. In addition to trade union officers, trainers, economists and labour lawyers were also used.

Training

As far as training is concerned, training efforts are still insufficient. 16.9% of respondents state that they have not participated in training courses – a percentage that seems higher in Italy, where it reaches 23.3%. The lack of training is not as evident in highly transnational groups (11.4%), where more than ten countries are involved in EWCs.

Training is organised mainly by the trade unions and EWCs, followed by activities organised by worker representation structures and training courses organised by companies. As far as funding is concerned, such activities are primarily financed by companies and the trade unions, followed by training activities financed by the European Commission and, far less frequently, by those financed by the European federation.

The contents of training activities concern topics pertaining to industrial relations and corporate strategies, followed by the development of communication and language skills and, finally, the development of skills concerning the interpretation of corporate financial statements.

Evaluation of EWC activities

As for the relationship with employees, a good level of communication with the labour force was reported. 77% of EWC delegates report the presence of direct communication with employees, with higher quotas for Italy (88.6%) and France (83.3%).

Similar levels emerged regarding the transmission of the results of extraordinary meetings to national and local trade union structures. In this case, 74.2% affirmed that results are transmitted in timely fashion, in particular in countries like France and Germany. The level of communication seems to be influenced by the level of transnationality, with an inverse relationship between the number of countries in the EWC and the level of communication.

It is interesting to notice that the majority of EWC delegates (58.9%) affirms that, in some cases, the EWC was able to provide a positive support to the strategies of local and/or national trade unions. The role of EWCs was particularly positive in terms of trade union support in Romania (100%) and Spain (69.2%). Moreover, increased EWC contribution to trade union strategies is significant in countries other than those where the corporate headquarters are located. This result is aligned with the original objective of the European directive itself. At the same time, it can be observed that EWC support for national and local trade union strategies is stronger in groups with a high level of transnationality. This trend corresponds to the fact that EWCs succeed in making more effective contributions to national industrial relations with the growth of the group size in the respective country. Vice-versa, it can be said that experiences of support to strategies of local and/or national trade unions are less numerous in case of employment levels not exceeding 500 employees (28.6%).



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These results could be interpreted as a trend towards the overcoming of a merely symbolic role to move towards a more effective role, one with greater impact on local and national industrial relations. On the other hand, we can affirm that EWCs are probably just starting to provide a significant contribution to national industrial relations, and that there are broad margins for a better integration at this level.

The survey also indicates that approximately one quarter of EWC delegates indicates a divergence between the strategy of their EWC and those of the local and/or national trade union. Such divergence is more pronounced in countries where the seat of the multinational group is located.

This result may be partly due to the fact that in the country where the multinational has its headquarters, relations between trade unions and corporate representation structures are more intense and, as a consequence, also the dialogue between actors is very articulated. Yet, this may also stem from the fact that the strategies do not coincide due to the presence of diverging interests between the two actors, as was frequently the case in the past in restructuring cases, in which the national trade union in the country where the seat of the multinational company is located tries to leverage on its privileged relationship with central management in order to defend national interests to the detriment of a European strategy.

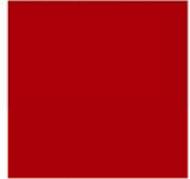
It is also interesting to note that the perception of the differences increases as the experience of EWC delegates increases: from 22.2% in the case of delegates with limited experience to 37.5% for those significant experience. It therefore seems that delegates with more experience perceived the differences better than their counterparts with less experience.

The judgement of the quality of the relations between EWC delegates and trade union structures is substantially satisfactory considering the overall scenario, with 31% stating that they are fully satisfied and 53% sufficiently satisfied. Apart from the total value, sample-specific trends can be observed: Italian and French delegates are, on average, less satisfied than those from other countries. The weight of respondents reporting sufficient satisfaction levels is higher for Italy and France.

Moreover, it can be noticed that lower levels of satisfaction are reported as the company size or the transnational character of the EWC increase. Finally, what emerges from the answers provided is that a higher level of experience seems to go hand in hand with a lower level of satisfaction about relations. This is probably due to the fact that not only are delegates with more experience more demanding, but they are also more capable of reading the flaws in the relations with trade union structures.

The fact that only 31% of EWC delegates is fully satisfied with the current status of relations with trade union structures indicates, in any case, that it is still necessary to invest in the improvement of the relations between the two actors.



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Conclusions

Regarding worker representation structures, the results of the questionnaires demonstrate that there is still a need to improve communication between the latter and EWCs. Moreover, worker reps would not seem to always have a clear idea of the transnational dimension of the group for which they work. Thus, the need is felt, on the one hand, for a stronger integration of worker reps within the information and communication network of EWCs and, on the other, it would be advisable to involve worker reps in training courses on the transnational dimension of the group and the potential of EWCs as an instrument for representing worker interests at the European level.

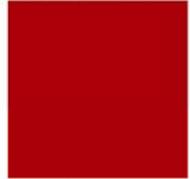
As a first step, EWCs should attempt to exercise their rights in a more resolute manner. This goes both for the use of certain resources and rights set forth by the EWC directive, and for the right and duty of informing all employees in member countries about the outcomes of the meetings held with management. To ensure increased effectiveness of EWC activities, it seems particularly important to pursue a more extensive use of resources capable of contributing to the strengthening and growth of the competence of EWC delegates, such as making use of external experts and training courses.

From the viewpoint of EWC functioning, moreover, it is fundamental to increase investment in in-house structures with a view to enhancing EWC operations between meetings with management.

As far as improving the visibility of EWC activities, further investments in information and communication technologies would be advisable. A more extensive use of these technologies would probably also contribute to a more capillary dissemination of the outcome of meetings with management.

Regarding the relationship between EWCs and trade union structures at a local level, the results of the survey indicate that there is still a need to invest on improving the relations between the two actors. This is particularly important for building an integrated network of actors at the European level. It is however encouraging that, in most cases, EWCs already succeed in sustaining trade union strategies at a local and/or national level. Nonetheless, there is still much room for better integration and more effective coordination in this respect.



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Report on Focus Groups

Participants

This report summarizes the results of 11 focus groups carried out in the project partner countries; in all the countries, the number of participants in the different focus groups ranged from 5 and 10.

In most cases, different types of actors took part in the focus groups: EWC delegates, members of the workers' representation structures at a company level and trade unionists involved with plants of multinational groups where an EWC was set up. This varied composition made it possible to analyse the issues tackled from different viewpoints, as well as to discuss specific problems related to individual actors. In this way, the problems pertaining to EWC functioning and coordination among the different levels of representation were considered from different perspectives.

Topics discussed

The themes tackled during the focus groups primarily concerned the functional problems of EWCs and the effectiveness of the relationship between the EWCs, on the one hand, and the workers' representation structures at a company level and trade unions on the other. With respect to the first of these dimensions, two topics in particular were tackled:

- a) Relations between EWC and management and the effectiveness of the information and consultation procedures;
- b) The inner EWC dynamics, its resources and the set of rights it can exercise.

As far as the relationship among the different actors, it should be underlined that there are expectations on the part of trade unionists and workers' reps at a company level vis-à-vis the EWC members, but there are also EWC expectations vis-à-vis the other players, in particular trade union structures. Having tackled the problem of the relationship between the different actors from a number of viewpoints made it possible to develop, within the focus groups, concrete proposals for improving coordination and communication between EWC members, worker reps at the company level and trade union structures.

According to the participants in some focus groups, one of the main limitations of EWCs is the impossibility of going beyond information processes. As a consequence, the need is underlined to develop, on the EWC side, the ability to impose coverage of the topics of interest during meetings with the central management and to develop joint requests and strategies. In some focus groups, positive experiences were reported, showing to what extent an EWC can obtain significant results at the European level, with a decentralised positive effect in the different countries.

On the contrary, it becomes increasingly difficult for EWCs to develop joint proposals in the case of restructurings. In this case, national interests often take priority. According to some focus group participants, such divergence of views can be overcome only through trade union intervention.





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One of the key problems lies in the limited resources of EWCs. The fact that EWC delegates are also worker representatives at a company level means they have less time at their disposal for tackling the issues that emerged during the EWC meetings. Considering that, as a general rule, EWC activities are not covered by additional trade union permit hours, these activities are often dealt with in a very limited amount of time, with obvious repercussions on the quality of the action undertaken at a European level.

Another element of difficulty is the absence of activities between meetings. The fact that between an EWC meeting and the next one the question is often set aside or addressed only sporadically injects a certain discontinuity in EWC activities. The same discontinuity that leads workers to perceive the EWC as largely ineffective.

Regarding the relationship between the EWCs and the worker representation structures at the company level, two different types of inadequacy need to be corrected. One is that not all the plants of a multinational group present in a country are informed about the results of the EWC meetings with the central management. Often, this information is provided in an adequate manner only in those plants where EWC delegates are present. It is interesting to note that this problem exists even in a country like Germany, with a model of worker representation which is very articulated and strongly institutionalised. A second limitation lies in the fact that communication, in most cases, is only one-way – it's the EWCs that inform corporate structures. What is lacking here is the possibility for worker representation structures at a company level to provide specific inputs to EWCs and ask them to tackle specific topics during EWC meetings.

In short, regarding the problems raised by the focus group participants, a certain level of convergence can be observed in the various countries: only a few topics are closely related to the characteristics of certain national contexts of industrial relations. An example in this sense is represented by the problem of the lack of resources, which is more or less accentuated depending on the national regulation applicable to representation matters. In any case, national contexts of industrial relations determine, to a certain extent, the overall evaluation of EWC effectiveness. In countries with strong worker representation, the EWC is generally considered a semi-superfluous body, whereas in countries with less extensive rights, focus group participants tend to consider the EWC a (possible) added value.

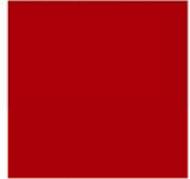
Proposals

The proposals developed by the focus groups also concern the improvement of both EWC functioning and the coordination among the various players.

The relationship between EWC and management

As far as the first dimension is concerned, one of the most recurrent proposals concerns EWC training. Among the themes proposed, there is the proposal for training courses aimed at enhancing EWC competence and making relations with management more effective. The idea not only concerns the development of labour law and business economics skills, but also competence in the domain of communication and management meeting techniques. In many cases, the success of meetings depends also on the ability of EWC delegates to impose themselves regarding the topics to be discussed and the management of the meetings themselves.



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In the event of conflicts, for instance concerning restructuring processes, it is suggested to utilise mass media with a more offensive goal, so as to exert pressure on management in this way, too.

Internal dynamics

The proposal is about training courses intended to contribute to enhancing internal dynamics. In this case, the courses should focus in particular on the different models of industrial relations, considering that they also influence how the role of trade unions is conceived.

Some focus group participants consider it essential to establish a network of informal relations capable of ensuring constant exchange between the EWC delegates. These processes ought to be supported by information and communication technologies fostering the exchange of documents and the online availability of reports and minutes, not only of plenary meetings, but also of the meetings of the different national coordination bodies.

Moreover, the possibility is underlined to share, at an EWC level, information gathered from the participation bodies at a national level. This applies, for instance, to information obtained during supervisory board meetings.

Some focus groups also highlighted the fact that EWC meetings and, in particular, preparatory meetings, ought to be used in a more targeted manner to promote an exchange of information and, first and foremost, good practices between and among the delegates of different countries.

Coordination among different actors

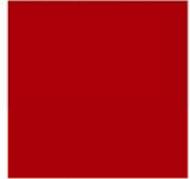
As for the development of communication between the EWCs and the other actors, the proposal goes in the direction of the drafting of newsletters and trade union releases, as well as of the creation of an EWC website. To disseminate the results of the EWC meetings with management, moreover, an attempt should be made to use the national co-ordination bodies in a more effective manner. In countries where these structures do not exist, or exist only partially, the need to disseminate the results of EWC meetings could be exploited as a chance to set up coordination bodies at a national level.

Training is also considered paramount to improve coordination between the various actors – but in this case, training should instead be aimed at worker representatives at the company level. To give representation structures at a company level the possibility to formulate concrete requests to EWC delegates, it would be useful to include the preparation of EWC meetings in the agenda of the meetings of the representation structures at a decentralised level.

As for dialogue with employees, the focus group results underscore the need to strengthen information channels. In this case, the proposal – coming from more than one focus group - is to broaden the knowledge of workers about the work done by the EWC, organising periodical meetings, on a rotating basis, in the different plants of the group. These measures should contribute to bridging the gap that still exists between workers and EWCs.

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The training module

Two fundamental characteristics were taken into account in constructing the training project: model experimentation and unit modularity.

The training objectives are to provide EWC members with effective and practical information tools. In this connection, the topics suggested are:

- EWC in a historical perspective, its role in industrial relations, its evolution and potential development
- The role of EWC members, at a transnational, national and local level
- Multinational companies and the frontier of transnational framework agreements – criticalities and opportunities
- Levels of negotiation and the role of EWC as a part of a multi-level network
- The multi-cultural dimension in European trade-unionism
- The presentation of best practices
- The good EWC meeting

This path was structured into 2.5 days of class work, with each topic was split into units, so as to make it possible to readjust the entire path based on specific needs, while keeping the training objective in mind as a guideline. The methods used were: lectures by experts on a number of different subjects, moderated debate and exchange and teamwork. The decision to use interactive methods was motivated by the need to create numerous discussion opportunities among participants, to forge additional links between theory and practice.

Also, when building the work groups, a precise methodological choice was made: every group included participants from different countries. This methodological choice raises, in some cases, the problem of language barriers, but mirrors the context and situation experienced when one is part of a EWC.

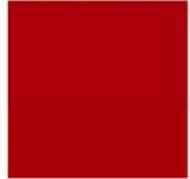
The session of best practices and that of the good EWC meeting were those with the strongest connection to practical activity.

During the presentation of best practices, a number of experiences and evaluations emerged, as shown below:

- Making joint declarations,
- Paying attention to different approaches (tones of communication),
- Anticipating and managing change,
- Pitfalls in consultation processes: often, only information is provided,
- Need to create training paths for EWC members, in order to strengthen real competence in the use of tools provided by the EWC founding agreements,
- Personal motivation is important for doing a good job within an EWC,
- Creating a standardised information and consultation procedure usefully supports the activity (always having available and documented information, always defining timeframes, giving EWC members a single set of information to be circulated among workers and their local representatives...),
- A web platform is an effective tool for exchange and networking,
- Need to constantly involve local worker representatives.

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Elements of this type have enriched the contents throughout the project, adding further information, passing on useful practices within the whole group of participants.

As for the evaluation of the course, two questionnaires were circulated and compiled - the first, to be compiled within the groups, evaluated every single unit, while the second, more general, was filled in individually in anonymous form.

The choice of the two questionnaires was made based on the experimental character of the course - the group questionnaire made it possible to analyse all the units from the perspective of contents, materials and workshops, while conveying comments, criticalities and suggestions that arose from the exchanges between participants.

Moreover, questionnaires highlighted an absolutely positive appreciation of the whole process. The most significant criticalities concerned:

Materials – it will be necessary to integrate some training sessions into the preparatory material.

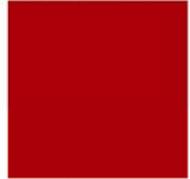
- Methodology – it would be advisable to fine-tune the connection between theoretical and hands-on training.
- Timeframe –it will be necessary to reconsider, for some sessions, the time allocated to the activities, considering the extensive discussion among participants.

Finally, some personal remarks from participants can provide food for thought:

- “hands-on training and the simulation were very useful, although more time should have been devoted to the simulation. Very good participation of everyone during the simulation”.
- “Two days and a half are sufficient for a pilot course, so as to get an overall idea of the course of future, deeper sessions”.
- “The seminar’s climate made me feel part of this group, I found the strength to work in the EWC, I will continue and go on thanks to you”.
- “I hope it will be possible to continue to organise these courses, and also involve other countries”.
- “This course is really high-level thanks to its participants, themes and organisation. It would be advisable to also bring companies into these contexts”.

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Description and instruction on the use of the tools and follow up

The main methodological steps of the actions will consist in:

- Elaboration of a methodology for both a quantitative and qualitative analysis of the links existing among different levels and instances of worker representation within multinational companies
- Collection and elaboration of both quantitative and qualitative information on practical functioning of EWCs' and local worker representatives' activity. The use of two tools will characterize the research approach: Questionnaire (quantitative data collection) and Focus groups (qualitative data collection).
- Elaboration of the outcome of the qualitative and quantitative analysis as training contents to be delivered to a target audience
- The delivery of a transnational training seminar for better implementation of information and consultation rights in MNCs and on EWC members' knowhow and practical activity
- Coordination and network building, focusing on exchange of good coordination practices for enhanced transnational trade union coordination. The web page of ICARUS project, which will be one of the concrete outputs, will be conceived in order to provide a strong support to the coordination and the network building process.
- Dissemination of the project results as patrimony of the trade union know-how on strategic coordination of information and consultation in the multidimensional context of multinational companies. Newsletter, Webpage, Documentary film on the project will be outputs of the projects, which have been conceived in order to disseminate more effectively the wide knowledge of the project.

Therefore knowledge, education and action are three methodological steps finding a coherent and accomplished outcome in the same project. Coherently, the project methodology includes the conception and realization of the core-tools used in the project phases.

The research, training and trade union action tools devised and tested during the course of the ICARUS project were conceived to be used in future projects as well.

Such tools, like the ICARUS dissemination tools – website, video-documentary, newsletter – are and will remain at the disposal of future users. What characterises the spirit of a project like ICARUS is contributing to collective knowledge and the sharing of material useful for improving industrial relations at both the national and transnational level.

Here below is an illustration of the tools devised for developing survey actions; training of representatives of workers' interests and trade union action.

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Focus groups

The focus group methodology was elaborated to accompany trade union meetings intended to reach two goals:

- fostering cross-contamination between participants (it should be remembered that the project involves different stakeholders: EWC members, worker representatives and trade union officers), so as to bring out problems and benefits, opportunities and critical points.

- adequately structuring a meeting to analyze specific situations and elaborate proposals, considering positive and negative aspects together.

This methodology is thus a tool intended to support a practice – that of meetings involving worker representatives and trade union officers – that is already commonplace. The added value lies in the adoption of a schematic, yet flexible approach to implement a process including: – Identification of the issue – Highlighting positive and negative aspects – Identification of solutions or improvements – Resources needed to take the necessary steps – Necessary operational tools – Actors involved in the solution or improvement action.

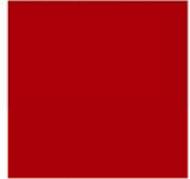
This tool, based on participation, is intended to foster constructive cooperation.

Questionnaires

Three different types of **Quantitative questionnaires** have been designed for the quantitative research stage. They were created for the purpose of surveying and mapping the experiences and knowledge of people involved in EWCs, local trade union officers, EWC members and representatives of workers in multinational undertakings. The parallel use of these three questionnaires (trade union officers, EWC members, worker representatives) makes it possible to collect and analyse information on the functioning of industrial relations in a given company, by cross-referencing the data that emerges from the questionnaires compiled by the three stakeholders in the representation of worker interests in local sites of multinational undertakings. The applied character of this research enables action on specific sectors and territorial frameworks. Data gathered provide a very rich and detailed body of information, and the tool is suitable for surveys intended to statistically measure a sample of medium-to-large size.

Qualitative questionnaires, instead, are conceived for the purposes of gathering, in a more immediate manner, information about the experience of individual EWC members, worker representatives and trade union officers. The three tools explore the experience of respondents as to **training**, **networking** (communication and coordination) and the **themes** dwelt upon during the course of **EWC** activity, as well as their effectiveness in terms of local action of worker interest representation. The collection of information is more direct, open questions make it possible to collect “narrated” answers and to build a discussion base on which to initiate a support activity on the part of trade unions, or a coordination activity of those involved in EWCs.



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Final remarks, the significance of a project like I.C.A.R.U.S.

The cohesion of the European trade union movement has now become one of the main goals of trade unions in the different member countries. The priority of a trade union endeavouring to become increasingly European must now be the pursuit of common objectives through a unified action.

This cohesion can also be fostered by processes like ICARUS, since the actions of a project give the trade union representatives in our organisations the opportunity to work together while gauging cultural differences and using them to enhance their political and professional skills.

A European project is an activity that both enriches and pursues this goal – nonetheless, the successful outcome of a co-ordinated activity involving partners from different countries is anything but guaranteed. When various activities and projects are planned and implemented from a distant place, in a multicultural context, and almost always without the possibility of using one's native language, working can become very complex. But this complexity also testifies to the opportunities and potential that organisations embarking on such a route can exploit.

In the international arena, the success of planned actions and the achievement of high-quality results derive from factors like the potential for mutual contamination and effective teamwork. When it comes to an international project, the solidity of the partner network will determine not only the elaboration of the political and trade union contents, but also the practical organisation of every single planned action.

Besides the political content developed, the strictly organisational aspect – which may be perceived as merely “technical” – brings remarkable added value for national organisations.

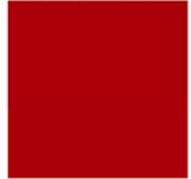
Therefore, the outcome of an international project can be successful in two ways: by furthering the project goals and by implementing good practices of trade union cooperation at a European level.

The core theme of the ICARUS project – the process of information and coordination among representatives of multinational undertakings – is definitely a challenge for the trade union movement. The coordination of trade unions at a European level and industrial relations in the age of globalisation entails extending trade union action well beyond the spatial level to protect both the interests and rights of working men and women. The fundamental mission of worker organisations remains unchanged, but this new frontier calls for the definition of specific, effective tools and operational modes.

The intent of this project was to provide activists, trade unionists and worker representatives with both the tools and the knowledge required to support trade union activities in multinational undertakings. Thanks to the concrete, pragmatic approach adopted throughout the project, the strategy underlying project conception and implementation can now rely upon a broad set of tools and a concrete analytical approach. This was possible thanks to research and discussion plans generated throughout the twelve months of activity pursued by the numerous partners in the project.

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The political and union objectives of the ICARUS project focused on the priorities set forth by the European Commission for the development of actions aimed at strengthening Social Dialogue, which is undoubtedly one of the core values that led to the formation of the European Union, and on which the very nature of EU institutions is founded. Against the backdrop of the economic crisis and the difficulty of proposing a strong model of social welfare in Europe for organisations like trade unions, it is necessary to strengthen the value and practice of this principle of democratic debate.

A number of strategic objectives have been achieved, fulfilling various needs associated with trade union activity. They concerned the development of the workers' information and consultation process and coordination among worker reps at the transnational level, as well as between the supranational and the local levels of representation of workers' interests. This is a critical issue, since the effectiveness of these relations is a key element for social dialogue, where workers and trade unions alike must feel fully involved, as protagonists, promoters and supporters, also in the transnational dimension.

On the basis of the European legislation on transnational representation of workers, a working plan has been developed to support those people who are involved in EWCs (European Works Councils) in our organisations, and set forth proposals for tackling the criticalities inherent to this type of trade union activities. During the project, the theme of EWC information and consultation was tackled, and an in-depth evaluation performed on the role of multinational enterprises as key players in the global market. This need to collect information leads to an examination of which factors and data need to be acquired in order to promote trade unionisation and collective bargaining in this specific context of industrial relations.

The results obtained through this project provide a broad range of operational options for gathering information, receiving training and networking with the workers of a multinational enterprise in one's home country or abroad. The coordination of trade union networks, training and investigation are indeed the three roads followed by this project. A number of different research tools, training modules and good practices have been tested with a view to devising strategies and tactics that trade unions can use when dealing with multinational enterprises and the challenges of globalisation.

Questionnaires, focus group methodology, training modules, elaboration of good practices and large-scale dissemination tools are now available to activists. Their experimentation generated a rich and detailed body of expertise that underpins the information and evaluations included in the final report, in the project website (www.icaruspartecipazione.eu) and in the publications informing about the project outcome.

Along with the accessibility of all these tools on the website, fully satisfying the need to create an open, collective knowledge base that anyone can access, many of the ICARUS characteristics – partnership, interaction of different types of activities, development of a number of tools ready to be reutilised, a high level of international participation and dissemination of results – bring significant added value.

The point of contact between concrete needs and the goals of this international project, along with the combination of the structural activity of the organisations and the project actions, were also crucial elements and rank among the project's major strong points.

ICARUS was developed and realized to address the concrete needs of trade union organisations and of men and women who, with their dedication, motivation and active engagement, devote their time and energy to making trade unions strong in multinational enterprises.

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