

FINAL CALL: NOW BOARDING!

Expressing Employees' strategic interests in Europe's boardrooms and the European Internal Market

18:00-19:30

book presentation “In the Union and on the Board”, experiences of Board Level Employee Representatives across Europe by Aline Conchon, Michael Gold, Norbert Kluge and interviews with Torbjörn Olsson, Siemens; Dietrich Schallehn, TÜV; Pat Compton, AnPost, Ireland; Ieke van den Burg, ASML

The session will be operated in English. There will be German interpretation.

Proposal for a structure of the session

1) Introductory short presentation by

- **Aline Conchon** (Researcher at ETUI, European Survey on BLER cross0over Europe) about country spread and historical roots of board level employee **participation (BLER) 10-15 ‘**
- **Michael Gold** (Senior Lecturer in European Business & Employee Relations, Royal Holloway University of London) about the book project and an overview on particularities, differences and similarities of BLER, **15-20’**

2) Interactive presentation by board level employee representatives (BLER) present. Ca. 40’

Questions to Ieke van den Burg:

a) In which company board you are sitting?

b) The **Dutch system** presents a very special interpretation of employees board level presence – in the proper meaning of the word there is no interest representation in the SVB of a Dutch company. However, **the Dutch system presents at the same time a rather political approach of company supervision**: The company does not belong only to the shareholders – it has to serve also to the benefit of the society. Thus, Dutch reps are insisting on “independency” of the function. Although in this regard the Dutch understanding is an antipode to the German understanding it is close to the original approach of GE Montanmitbestimmung telling us that companies are there for creating social welfare. How is your comment on my perception? Perhaps you could use an example in order to illustrate the effects of your doing in the supervisory board.

c) A question about the **power of BLER in NL**: Who is it in the Dutch system being able to effecting influence also on economic management decisions? Is it rather Dutch works council which enjoys strong rights in this regard by the WORC? How works the interplay between the three channels of creating employees power, the trade unions, the works council and the membership in the supervisory board.

d) Is your position regarded as a **professional function**? Is there any remuneration for your activity and how do you deal with it?

Questions to Dietrich Schallehn:

- a) Please give us an idea about the company in which you are representing employee interests
- b) Your position according GE co-determination law can be perceived as a contrast most distant to the Dutch version of BLER. You hold the **legal position as external trade union officer** provided with the supervision function in the company board of German TÜV (technical inspection) – please could you explain your special role in GE codetermination system and how this is perceived by the works council reps and also the shareholder reps. How do you deal for example with information you received about the economic situation of the company and being involved as a trade unionist in negotiations on wages?
- c) How do you see your **special influence concerning more general demands rooting into social debates** like how to cut perversion of executive remuneration? As far as we see GE SVB are also responsible for fixing remuneration of executives. Or, as another example, the company deals with technical inspection. Did you ever triggered a debate thematizing aspects of sustainable orientations of the company?
- d) How **much effort do you have to calculate for your function?** How compatible is this with you other duties being a full time trade union officer? How you deal with remunerations for your SVB function?

Questions to Torbjörn Olsson

- a) What are the characteristics of your company and the position of being a member of the administrative board in a Swedish company
- b) In your interview you highlighted that **you feel more respected** by certain people around you. Please could you describe more in detail which issues you have in mind more concretely? Perhaps you would have an example from your every day experience.
- c) In Sweden being a **board level rep looks rather like a trade union function in the company**. Please could you explain briefly to us, how this board function is related to interest representation at the workplace?
- d) You are positioned at the decision making level in a **Swedish subsidiary of a multinational German based company**: How do you assess the real competence and power to take influence executive decisions which are probably subordinated to decision making at the top of the company? Does exist any contacts or exchange with your colleagues representing the workforce in the SVB of the GE mother company? In this regard, is there a special function for a European Works Council?

Questions to Pat Compton

a) Please tell a little bit more about the particularities of the company in which you hold the position as so called worker director.

b) How do you see the **recognition of this type of interest representation in the Irish system of labour relations?**

c) Performing as worker director: **what does it help for employees at their workplaces?** You described your activity as being a mediator in the company? What does it mean more in particular? Is it also about collective bargaining?

c) As an Irishman you witnessed the decline of sheer shareholder capitalism very closely: Against this background, do you see **any dawn for stronger control of executives urging them to take also social benefits into their consideration?** In the current situation, do you see any possibility to promote worker participation in your country? What might be the conclusion of the trade unions in this regard?

3) **Final discussion on the question “BLER – overall and the future: what does experiences with board level presence make for the future of this position in companies corporate governance”, ca. 20’**

Objective: To link back to the general subject of the event:

- How to articulate employees interests effectively and the social dimension of companies performance?
- How to make this institution more common and accepted for European politics?

Norbert Kluge, 21.11.2010