ABSTRACT FOR IREC

The European Company Survey and social dialogue

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Eurofound carried out in 2013 the third wave of the European Company Survey which focused on work organisation, human resource practices, social dialogue, employee participation. More than 30,000 workplaces, of which 15,000 had a form of employee representation, were interviewed. Interviews with management and employee representatives took place revealing the state of play in the European companies in 2013. In an increasingly competitive global market, European management indicated that are engaging with different forms of innovation: i) in 34% of establishments, new or improved methods for marketing or communication; ii) in 41% of establishments, new or significantly changed products or services; and iii) in 36%, new or significantly changed processes for producing goods or supplying services. How work is organised is of fundamental importance to the ECS, hence it is asking whether decision-making is centralised (so that it is performed solely by top management) or decentralised (allowing employees to carry out their tasks with some form of autonomy that can lead to greater well-being). Moreover, the majority of establishments provided training for their employees in the 12 months preceding the survey.

Social dialogue is central to the ECS which explores the incidence of forms of employee representation in the establishment. Data show that 32% of them do have a formal elected employee representation structure. There are wide differences between countries but also between different sizes of establishments. The Information and Consultation Directive (2002/14/EC) requires the provision of information to and the consultation with employee representatives in all companies with 50 employees or more, or establishments employing at least 20 people. Information and consultation must take place with regard to the financial and employment situation of the company as well as with regard to decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations. ECS asked employee representation bodies whether they have been provided with information on employment and financial issues and to what extent the information was timely and of good quality. Similarly, managers were asked to what extent they have informed the relevant employee representation structure on major issues and decision related to the establishment operations. Overall ER representatives report (80%) that they have been informed in time and the information was considered of good quality. However, figures are much lower for joint decision making and providing views prior to decisions. Collective bargaining is another dimension ECS explored by asking questions on whether an agreement on pay has been negotiated and whether any higher level agreements, namely, company, sector, regional or cross-sector has applied on the establishment. Issues dealing with industrial action and work climate have also been examined.