Mass Redundancies in Italy and Ireland: How Much Information, How Much Consultation?

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Theme 2: Industrial relations around Europe: What future in Europe for collective voices and responses to the employment crisis?

The impact of the crisis, as is well known, has been particularly severe in a number of Member States. This paper considers two of these, Italy and Ireland. The paper looks at the issue of mass (collective) redundancies in these two countries. Corporate restructurings, particularly where they involve redundancies and have a transnational element, may cause significant risks and dangers for workers (in terms of their health and employment status), for undertakings (in terms of their productivity, profitability, location and long-term future) and for countries and regions (in terms of growth, employment, and social cohesion). It is because of the huge social, economic and political significance of transnational corporate restructuring that the EU has put in place a number of legal instruments that seek to protect workers (by ensuring they have some involvement in decisions to be taken), undertakings (by ensuring decisions are fully informed and adequate consultation takes place before decisions are finalised), and national and regional authorities (by ensuring they are notified, and consulted, in relation to corporate decision-making of public importance).

Based on a critical assessment of the impact of measures in place at both the European and national levels, this paper evaluates whether information and consultation rights are adequately secured by the existing legal regime. The paper also examines the impact of national transposition of EU laws and how this impacts on worker protection, and corporate-decision making, by comparing the Italian and Irish cases.

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