



VP/2009/003/0208 - Joint Training and learning for Sustainable Information & Consultation

Report from Seminar 3 GLASGOW 26th October 2010

Overall Objectives of the Seminar:

All delegates aim to report on the progress of their Actions Plans agreed at Seminar 2 in Budapest May 2010. The general aim is to build a strong and positive trade union presence in their workplace, through good communication with members and management.

Outputs planned:

- Review the baseline and second assessment by trade union delegates of skills matrix
- Present and review Action Plans from partner countries and work achieved this year
- To discuss and exchange learning on best practice examples of information and consultation in the workplace
- To discuss and exchange views about the current challenges in the food and drink industry across partner countries





Agenda for Seminar

Venue: Ramada Hotel Glasgow

- 9.00:** Coffee and meet with colleagues
- 9.30:** Conference begins with a welcome and overview by Harry Donaldson GMB Regional Secretary
- 9.45:** Report by Stephy Pordage of the aim of project leading to Action Plans agreed in May 2010.
- 10.05:** First report by colleagues within the project – Poland – on progress of action plans and learning from the project
- 10.25:** Questions from delegates
- 10.35:** Second report by colleagues within the project – Hungary – on progress of actions plans and learning from the project
- 10.55:** Coffee break
- 11.15:** Questions from delegates
- 11.25:** Third report by colleagues from Scotland on progress of action plan and learning from the project
- 11.45:** Questions from delegates
- 12.00:** Speakers from partner countries talk informally on the challenges in their companies of implementing the Information and Consultation Directive; encounters with management; the usefulness of the skills learning and development in Budapest.
- 12.30-13.20:** Lunch at the hotel



13.20: Divide into 2 groups to:

1. Exchange information and learning about the food and drink across Europe.
2. Log examples of best practice in their company in the area of employee communication and consultation. Each group joined by management representatives of Scottish companies.
3. Seek input from managers/companies on their perspective of trade union performance in the workplace and their approach in negotiations – what works and what does not work for them?

15.00: Tea Break

15.20: Feedback from groups on discussions

16.00: General discussion in room and ideas logged to suggest any future developments, progress or exchange, also what key things might be done to continue to develop working positively with management

16.20: Short summary from Harry Donaldson: thanks and goodbye



Seminar Notes

1. Results of Skills Assessment – Stephy Pordage

At the first Seminar meeting in Warsaw in February 2010 the trade union delegates and employer representatives worked together to explore a number of issues common to the food and drink industry across Europe.

One key aim of the Seminar was to work to agree and create a Trade Union Representative Skill Matrix, capturing the essential and core skills required by workplace representatives in the current economic climate.



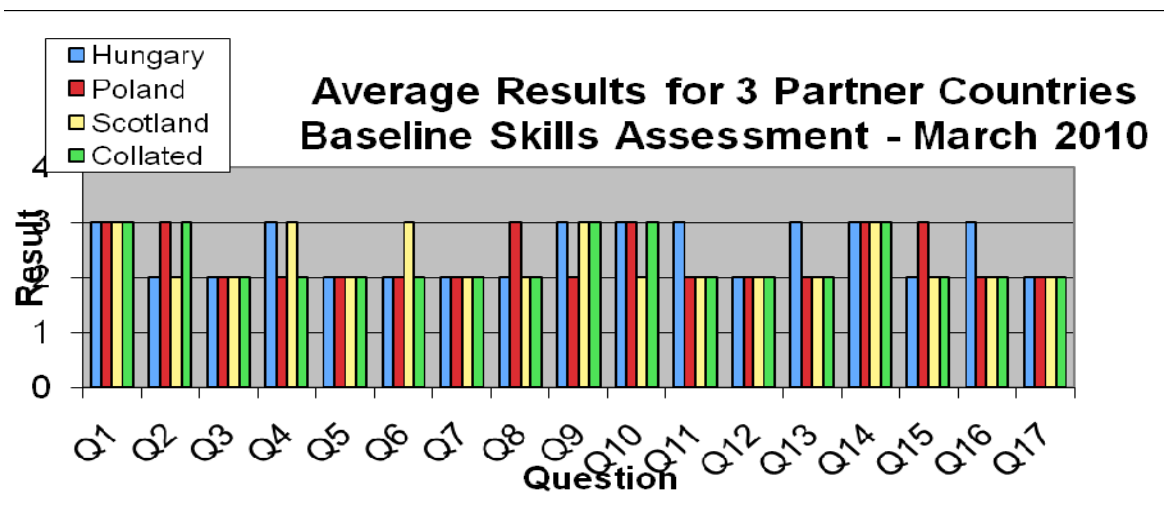
The result was a series of 17 self-assessment questions seen below:

UNDER-CONFIDENT	OKAY	GOOD	EXCELLENT
= 1	=2	=3	=4

1. When I stand up and present information/news to my colleagues, I believe I am.....
2. When I stand up and present information to management, I believe I am.....
3. When I talk and deal with managers on difficult work issues I think I appear to them as.....
4. When I have to help workplace employees who have difficult issues, I believe I am.....
5. When I have to understand and explain to colleagues complex financial information from the company, I believe I am.....
6. When meeting senior management to represent a TU member, I believe I am.....
7. As a member of the workplace committee representing an agreed trade union view/position to employees, I believe I am.....
8. As a member of the workplace committee representing an agreed trade union view/position to management, I believe I am.....
9. In negotiations with employees on issues I believe are not trade union matters, I am.....
10. My understanding of the role/responsibility of a workplace trade union representative is.....
11. I think my ability to understand, engage and consult with employees on a psychological level is.....
12. I believe my ability to independently identify important issues and propose alternatives when negotiating with management is ...
13. My ability to organize a workplace campaign and communicate it positively at all levels is.....
14. I believe my understanding and ability to work as a trade union 'team' is.....
15. My ability to plan a strategy for a workplace issue & implement with success is.....
16. When it is needed, I believe my ability to create an atmosphere of reconciliation in my workplace is.....
17. I believe my reaction to and way of dealing with stressful situations in the workplace is.....

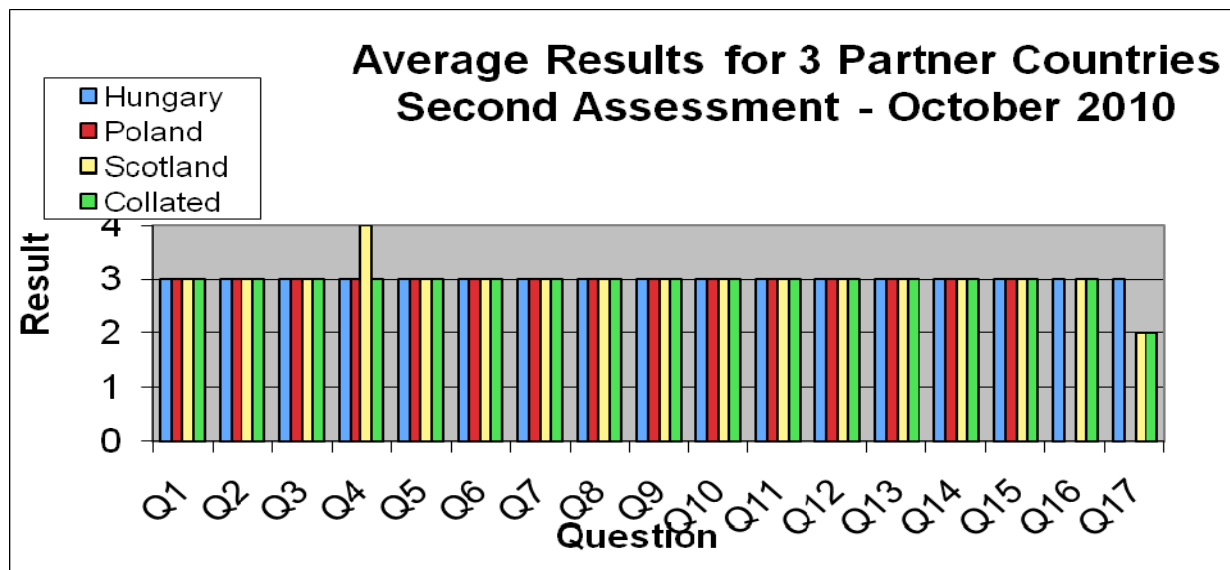
Delegates in each partner country completed the first and baseline assessment in March 2010, the result being:

The majority of answers fall into Level 2 or the response 'OKAY', which indicates a lack of confidence in some key skills areas like engaging with management, explaining financial information, organizing communication campaigns and dealing with stress in the workplace. Whereas, the more familiar and common elements of understanding of the role of a trade union, working as team with colleagues and presenting information to colleagues score Level 3 which is response 'GOOD'. There are no score at Level 4 or response excellent.



Delegates completed the assessment again in October 2010 following the intervention of training and development, the result being:

The result from this second assessment shows distinct changes. For the all but one question, No. 17, delegates consider that their skills have improved. The move is from most people feeling they are at Level 2 OKAY, to the overall assessment of Level 3 GOOD. So people are feeling and thinking more confidently after the intervention of development and training and the key exchange of views and learning at the Second Seminar in Budapest. Furthermore, people have had time over the summer months to implement their focused Action Plans which has added to the value of their development and progress.





2. Feedback from Action Plans – Franek Sojka, Poland

Aims decided by the Polish group. These were extensive and ambitious:

- selection of the Councils of Workers (All)
- programs to run anti-stress survey (all)
- assistance to staff at redemption of state shares and employee ownership proposal (sugar industry)
- changes in the Rules of Remuneration (Mars)
- division of the Social Funds (Balsen)
- changes in the Collective Agreement (Danish Crown)
- improvement of information within union (Philip Morris)

After discussion delegates agreed that one of the most important aims is - the successful election to the Council Workers at Philip Morris.

Why the election of Works Council is so important?

Works Council is a form of widening and improving dialogue between employees and employer.

The employer has the obligation to provide the Council with information concerning the business, the economic situation of the company, anticipated changes in work organization and employment, measures to maintain employment for everybody.

The employer is obliged to consult with the Council a number of issues particularly those related to changes in employment.

Implementation of the Action Plan Achieved:

- disseminate information about changes in the Workers' Councils
- selection of candidates
- selected candidates are presented to employees through the website, e-mail, newsletter etc
- integration meetings under the anti-stress project
- 240 people took part in these meetings in August and September

Summary:

Participation in the project has given Polish delegates the impulse to appropriate action. Now we follow the process we learnt, hold discussions, agreed an action plan and consistently execute it. We have improved the flow of information. About 300 members of the Association receive current information by e-mail. We improved the distribution of the newsletter. We are updating the website. Excellent output of this project was to organize the integration meetings. Already, we have prepared a plan of such meetings for next year. We attained a great election result in Lezajsk. All members of The Workers' Council are from 'Solidarnosc'.

An important result of our work is the consolidation of the members.

There was also a short report from another delegate regarding the situation of employee ownership at Polish Sugar. The company is due to be taken fully into private hands from state owned. Government and management had not turned to own employees to raise the capital. So Solidarnosc, employees and management have formed company to buy block shares ie equivalent to 1 month salary per year for 7 years. They are aiming for 52% ownership. This is a positive move for trade union, employee and management cooperation.

Top line result of Stress in the Workplace survey found that over 90% of employees said they suffer stress. Management conducted own survey and found same result. Discussion on how to alleviate this stress is ongoing.

3. Feedback from Action Plans – Dr. Szilvia Borbely, Hungary

The Hungarian partners decided to take an innovative approach to the action plans and agreed to work across all represented workplaces. The working plan of the Hungarian team – stress survey. The questionnaire had 6 questions on respondents' main characteristics + 30 on stress situations. The sample: 85 persons in undertakings involved in the project.

Gender distribution – almost even. Age distribution 31- 40 years old (25%) above 51 (25%) – more health problems. 28,7% of men has managerial post, 12, 9% of women.



Identified Stressors:

- Private life (tensions) – reconciliation with work
- Workplace environment (not comfortable or unhealthy)
- Work arrangement (Unreal time requirements)
- Managerial support (lack of it)
- Human relations at workplace
- Information and consultation
- Habits
- Corporal and mental health state
- Position at workplace (responsibilities)

General results: 36% of men -18% of women has tensions 'once in a while'; 43,6% of men - 52,6% of women has tensions "from time to time";

15,4% of men - 21,1% of women has tensions 'frequently' ; 5,1% of men and 5,3% of women has 'always tensions in private life'.

More than one quarter of sample is under real threat taking into consideration the noise temperature

Near to quarter of sample is under threat due to watching monitor more than 6 hours/day

According to 34% of the sample human relations at workplace are full of tensions.

Habits and mental health state:

- More than 75% of all sample does not do sports at least three times a week 30 minutes
- More than half of the sample does not eat regularly at the same times.
- A high percentage smokes and sleeps 5 hours or less a day.
- 42, 3% of sample considers its general health state bad or just only admissible.
- Only 8 % of the sample considers the own general health state excellent

Conclusion:

- Need of urgent intervention to fight workplace stress
- There is plenty of room to use tools like information and consultation to do it.
- *Tension is not due to the human relations with colleagues but to other causes (like uncertainty in crisis, decreasing demand for the product, etc.)*
- *27 persons – 31, 8% of the whole sample – "once a while" or "time to time" or "frequently" is humiliated at workplace.*



4. Feedback from Action Plan – Margaret Boyd, Scotland

Objectives for the Actions

- To build a **STRONGER** Trade Union presence in the workplace, McVitie's, through good communication with members and management!
- All Delegates wished to improve their advice to members, and representation of members
- Improve problem solving skills!

Content:

- Communication & action in the workplace
- Improve strategic approach with management
- Gain confidence in negotiation skills
- Gain confidence in presentations

Aims:

- To negotiate with management for regular joint meetings
- Re-structure health and safety committee
- Look to national company for meeting regarding reduction of severance pay to one week for over 50's.
- Improve communication flow from TU to shop floor
- Make present to senior management team of the development in Budapest

Successes:

- Regular meetings with management established
- Identified and recruited health and safety stewards, negotiated GMB training for them – more consistent and stable committee
- National officers still working to meet national company on severance issue
- Improved communication with members by distribution of leaflets about the factory

Learning Points:

- Managing time frames
- Preparation for meetings and disciplinary support is critical
- Need excellent presentation skills
- Approachability with management

Still to Achieve:



- Improve relationship with team managers and members
- Challenge actively not defensively
- Act on frustrations and plan well

Jonathan Simpson, Business Partner from McVitie's plant gave some positive comments following the presentation. He stated that the TU is now involved in the Communication Committee and that that new and better ways of communicating with employees have been implemented including Branch Meetings on site. Also it was the Works Council that suggested the 1 week factory closure to help idle time, which was a real partnership approach to a serious problem.

A general discussion took place with an open floor and HR Directors from whisky companies Edrington and Glenmorangie made comments about the type and importance of communication processes in their workplaces.





The afternoon session saw delegates divide into groups to enable more depth and breadth to the discussions. The groups and 3 areas to base their discussion on:

- Exchange information and learning about the food and drink industry across Europe
- Log examples of any be the communication and consultation
- Seek input from managers on their perspective of TU performance in the workplace and approach to negotiations

Key Feedback from Groups

Food & Drink Industry

- Difficult situations across Europe for all
- Increased competition
- Need for efficiency and change
- Management & TU don't always agree on ways forward
- Communication a key issue – management and TU need to work together to help employees understand future and changes.

Good Practice

- Day of communication in circus tent
- Rewards get together and recognition of people on notice boards
- Joint management and TU committee to deal with stress in workplace and programme of activities started
- EWC in Philip Morris has achieved well in redundancy and outsourcing policy
- Solidarnosc has sporting events for members
- Cheese factory put money aside to have evening together in a hotel
- Using red and green ticks on notice-boards to indicate achievement or not of factory KPIs
- Large good briefings are good as they deal with information vacuum



Manager – TU Relationships

- Philip Morris LEAN initiative has TU leading on emotional side of work
- Training programme for management on empathy and there was an assessment by employees of managers and this has led to better relationships
- Have to be responsive to employee questions and not contradictory

Final Comments:

- This process of honest exchange of views and ideas should continue through web pages. GMB to investigate how this could be done
- How do we as a group with common aims and good track of communication engage with Governments in social dialogue for positive results?
- EFFAT could supply more data on pan-European issues like minimum wage levels. Peter Senior said it could be raised at the next meetings in November
- Scotland has good relationships with MSPs and will now seek out MEPs to discuss some of the pan-European issues which have been raised today and look for solutions to situations
- In Hungary – mainly the multinational companies – hamper the establishment of trade unions at company level. The new centre-right Government – having absolute majority in Parliament – was elected in Spring 2010 putting in danger the seriousness of macro-level (tripartite) social dialogue and interest reconciliation.

KEY ACTION

- Scottish partners will facilitate a meeting between MSPs and MEPs to contact Hungarian and Polish counterparts to discuss EU wide issues in the food and drink industry and to share key information.

It was agreed at the plenary that the Seminar had been a great success. It had consisted of wide ranging discussions and the many opportunities to exchange information and give advice to colleagues. It was said by many people that one of the most valuable parts was to hear what is concerning and challenging the manager's and trade unions in this current economic climate.