

DECLARATION

EUROPEAN WORKS COMMITTEES

November 2021

We, the signatories of this Declaration, believe that workers' rights can be furthered through the willingness to commit to open dialogue and strong collaboration between management and employees. The European Works Council is one of the best instruments at European level to achieve stronger representation of transnational employee rights through information and consultation. A more efficient use of the EWC instrument is essential in order to achieve this objective.

Therefore, we:

- Call for the establishment of an EWC in all transnational companies that do not have one yet (provided they meet the criteria) in order to promote democracy at the workplace and adopt more balanced transnational policies;
- Call for the strengthening of transnational employee's involvement in shaping company policies that affect them directly;
- Encourage strengthening of law enforcement mechanisms and the introduction of proportional sanctions for companies for non-compliance with legal provisions with regard to the establishment of an EWC once all conditions are met;
- Recommend the update of current EWC agreements to include perspectives from key EU-level policies such as adaptation to climate change and digitization of economy;
- Encourage the creation of more efficient methods of information dissemination for knowledge on EWCs and I&C rights among workers, and how they are different from other social dialogue mechanisms (like trade unions, works councils, board-level employee representation),
- Encourage the capacity-building and horizontal networking of EWCs across companies from a certain industry/sector in order to strengthen European dimension of industrial relations;
- Strongly encourage the management of European transnational companies to use EWCs in order to anticipate and mitigate the main challenges of the following years: long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and other epidemiological threats which would affect the job market at a global level, climate change, social inequality etc., on companies and workers alike. Workers should be consulted (through EWCs) on issues such as:
 - Training skills in light of digitalization



- Changes in work organization and production processes
- Working hours
- Working conditions – health and safety, especially mental health
- Protection of personal data
- Strongly recommend that the worker’s representatives (unions etc.) to educate themselves to these challenges and how they impact their base so that they can (1) communicate them eloquently to their base and receive feedback and (2) be able to discuss them with management and propose feasible recommendations – become discussion partners.

In light of the pandemic, multinationals and the global supply chain are challenged more than ever. Main challenges include sustaining productivity, adapting to remote work, and protecting the health and safety of workers. A new challenge shared by both multinationals and workers is how to ensure a good balance of family and professional life while working remotely (how to motivate/be motivated, how to prevent “screen burnout” and mitigate effects of the decrease in socialization, mental health comes to the forefront above physical health in some sectors etc.).

As work moves to be remote, there’s a shift to it becoming more standardized than it was when it was physical and transnational borders were not blurred. COVID has caused many employees to reconsider the impact their job has on their life – the United States is already witnessing a “Great Resignation” – putting pressure on multinational companies to improve their retention, HR, and benefits policies in an increasingly remote-working job market. Therefore, it is crucial to engage the employees in consultations regarding the aforementioned issues so policies are in line with real employee needs. We recommend the efficient use of EWCs in order to ensure the just transition and social dialogue to overcome challenges and protect employee rights as well as their wellbeing.

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