



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

# Working conditions and social dialogue

Key definitions  
Outline of existing research  
Case study examples  
Success factors and lessons learnt  
Social partners' views on social dialogue  
Commentary  
References  
Annex 1: Overview of surveys cited in report  
Annex 2: Country codes and abbreviations

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Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Dublin 18, Ireland. - Tel: (+353 1) 204 31 00 - Fax: 282 42 09 / 282 64 56  
e-mail: [information@eurofound.europa.eu](mailto:information@eurofound.europa.eu) - website: [www.eurofound.europa.eu](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu)

*This report examines the link between working conditions and social dialogue, highlighting instances where social dialogue has had an impact on working conditions. The impact of social dialogue on working conditions is considered at all levels – national, sectoral, company and workplace levels. There is also a specific focus on occupational health and safety. The first section of the report maps existing research and administrative reports, highlighting the findings of surveys, both quantitative and qualitative, that have identified a link between social dialogue and working conditions. The second section looks at examples of social dialogue drawn from case studies that have had an impact on working conditions in a range of areas. Some examples of incomplete social dialogue are also presented, including possible reasons for the shortcomings. Finally, the report identifies potential lessons for the future in terms of factors that contribute to the success or failure of social dialogue.*

## Key definitions

The report uses the following definitions of social dialogue and working conditions for the purposes of its analysis:

- social dialogue – refers to all types of formal dialogue, involving discussions, consultations, negotiations and joint actions, undertaken by employer representatives and elected worker representatives in relation to working conditions in the workplace;
- working conditions – encompasses conditions relating to the working environment and the non-pay elements of an employee's terms and conditions of employment. This includes areas such as the organisation of work and work activities, training, skills and **employability**, health, safety and well-being, and **working time** and **work-life balance**.

The report broadly covers social dialogue developments at all levels – national, sectoral, regional, company and workplace levels. This includes company and workplace-level **collective bargaining** between employers and employee representatives.

A particular focus is placed on the issue of occupational **health and safety**. In their responses to the questionnaire on which this report is based, national correspondents have included information on the role of the social partners in occupational health and safety strategy formulation and implementation at the workplace. A key reference in this context is Council Directive 89/391/EEC of 12 June 1989 on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work, which refers to the introduction and improvement of preventive measures related to occupational risks. The directive states that: 'employers shall consult workers and/or their representatives and allow them to take part in discussions on all questions relating to safety and health at work.'

## Outline of existing research

This section looks at existing research and administrative reports that identify a link between the presence of social dialogue and its impact on working conditions. It is divided into an analysis of quantitative surveys, by subject area of influence, qualitative surveys, also grouped according to subject area, and administrative reports. An overview of the surveys establishing a link between social dialogue and working conditions is provided on a country-by-country basis in Annex 1.

It should be noted that, in some of the new EU Member States, social dialogue structures are often not yet sufficiently developed to enable research to be carried out on the potential influence of social dialogue on working conditions. For example, in Cyprus, social dialogue is currently restricted to areas such as working time and **annual leave**; this is partly due to a lack of specialised staff to respond to the new and sometimes complex issues that are emerging.

## Surveys

### *Difficulties and caveats*

A number of difficulties arise when attempting to report the findings of surveys regarding the link between social dialogue and working conditions. Firstly, it must be borne in mind that a great variety of national systems operate around Europe; therefore, it is difficult to ensure that survey findings mean the same thing in each country, as the context may differ. For example, in Denmark, health and safety must, by law, be the subject of formal dialogue in all companies with more than 10 employees, which means that this issue will predominate in any analysis of social dialogue.

Furthermore, many surveys point to caveats in their data. For example, an Estonian survey ([in Estonian with English summary, 567Kb PDF](#)), which examined trade unions' impact on working conditions, found that where there is no trade union present, working conditions are set at the minimum statutory level and that trade unions have the power to raise the standard of working conditions of the workers they represent (Kallaste, 2004). However, shortcomings of this research include the fact that only a small proportion of the total number of collective agreements are formally registered and therefore available for analysis, while the sample may also be biased towards larger companies; moreover, collective agreement coverage is generally low in Estonia and alternative forms of social dialogue might have more relevance but be more difficult to analyse.

Some studies appear to show a link between the presence of trade unions and positive effects on various aspects of working conditions. However, in some cases, the studies do not control for the fact that this favourable effect concerns both large and public sector companies, where trade unions are more likely to be present anyway.

Finally, although many surveys map the existence of social dialogue in a range of areas relating to working conditions, few actually make the connection between the two and therefore fail to show a link between the presence of social dialogue and its potential impact on working conditions.

The following examples refer to surveys that do, in fact, attempt to show this link; these surveys are grouped according to subject areas or the different aspects of working conditions.

### *Working time*

In countries where works councils exist, some studies have found a link between their existence and fewer working hours or lower levels of **overtime**. In Germany, for instance, a survey conducted in 2005 by the Institute for Employment Research (Institut für Arbeitsmarkt- und Berufsforschung, [IAB](#)) compared establishments with more than five employees – both with and without works councils – in eastern and western Germany. The survey found that, in western Germany, the weekly working hours of establishments with works councils were on average 0.6 hours lower than those without works council. Data for eastern Germany, while not as robust, also pointed to similar findings. This is thought to be explained by the works councils' influence on the implementation of **collective agreements**.

Similarly, an Austrian working climate survey, which looked at differences between companies with and without a works council, found that regular overtime working was between 18% and 24% less frequent in companies with a works council than in those without a works council.

A negotiated reduction in working time has been a priority in France for over a decade, in the context of the statutory reduction of the working week from 39 to 35 hours. In this country, a system of mandating was put in place for companies without a trade union presence, under which employees elected for this purpose may represent the workforce in working time reduction negotiations. The rationale behind this initiative is to encourage dialogue on working time reduction in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), where trade unions are less likely to be present. A French questionnaire-based survey examining professional relations and negotiations in enterprises (*Relations professionnelles et négociations d'entreprise*, [REPONSE](#)) in 2004–2005 was conducted by the Directorate for Research, Analysis and Statistics (Direction de l'Animation de la Recherche, des Études et des Statistiques, [DARES](#)) at the Ministry of Labour, Social Relations and Solidarity

([Ministère du Travail, des Relations Sociales et de la Solidarité](#)). The survey found that a quarter of the 3,000 establishments examined, with at least 20 employees, had used the system of mandating for negotiating the reduction of working time; this implies that the trade unions were, by innovative means, able to provide partners for social dialogue on working time reduction in SMEs.

### *Occupational health and safety*

A range of surveys have examined the link between the presence of social dialogue and its effects on occupational health and safety. For example, a Belgian trade union [survey \(in Dutch, 232Kb PDF\)](#) covering some 3,000 employees working in SMEs found a correlation between the presence of trade unions and the extent of influence that employees reported having on managerial decisions relating to occupational health and safety in their company, although the main determinant was occupational status (De Weerd et al, 2005). Furthermore, the study found that the information flow on occupational health and safety matters to workers was better if a trade union was present. Similarly, a study of trade union representatives in Bulgaria, commissioned by the International Labour Organization ([ILO](#)), revealed a positive impact of social dialogue in the area of occupational health and safety, more specifically regarding issues such as: good access to occupational health and safety training; trade union participation in the development of occupational health and safety policy and regulations; and improvements in occupational health and safety as a result of monitoring (Rice and Repo, 2000). For example, the survey found that in 62.6% of the workplaces studied, the results of workplace exposure levels obtained from monitoring activities were passed on to the trade union. Moreover, 50.2% of respondents believed that some improvements had been made after monitoring had taken place, and this figure rose to 65.6% when the trade unions were informed about the results. Some studies look at the influence of workplace-level structures comprising both employee and employer representatives. For example, in Finland, much of the debate on occupational health and safety revolves around the maintenance of work ability (MWA), which is carried out by groups at workplace level, consisting of representatives from business management, human resources management (HRM), personnel, and occupational safety and health services. According to MWA Barometer research in 2004 – conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health ([Työterveyslaitos, TTL](#)) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health ([Sosiaali- ja Terveysministeriö](#)) – two thirds of respondents reported that attitudes towards MWA activities were positive at their workplace, while about 90% believed that MWA activities were beneficial for their workplace. Areas where respondents viewed the impact of MWA activities to be particularly positive included improvements in the ability to cope at work, physical health, workplace atmosphere and cooperation at work, along with reduced absenteeism, better working conditions and enhanced work type.

In terms of employer attitudes to dealing with sickness and disability, a [survey \(in Norwegian, 565Kb PDF\)](#), commissioned by the Norwegian research institute [Fafu](#) and based on interviews with both employer and employee representatives, found a link between the existence of social dialogue – either in the form of agreements signed under the national tripartite Agreement on an Inclusive Working Life (IW-Agreement) or in the form of collective agreements – and the employer's readiness to take more responsibility for employees who have been ill or who are disabled (Trygstad, 2006). This mainly takes the form of making workplace adjustments. Moreover, the survey concluded that well-developed social dialogue enables issues connected with the working environment and sickness absence to be placed on the company's agenda more often than in organisations where social dialogue is underdeveloped.

Finally, a 2006 Swedish [survey \(in Swedish, 6.84Mb PDF\)](#) of regional health and safety representatives in the construction, manufacturing and service sectors – conducted on behalf of the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions ([Landsorganisationen i Sverige, LO](#)) – looked at the role of these representatives (Gellerstedt, 2007). It reported that 94.8% of respondents considered that their work as regional safety representatives had contributed to improving the working environment. At the same time, a majority of the respondents believed that both management and employees played only a passive role in matters relating to the work environment – predominantly in the area of health

and safety, although this could also include issues such as working time; this implies, therefore, that the health and safety representatives took on the main responsibility in relation to these areas.

### *Stress at work*

Some survey evidence points to the positive impact of social dialogue on the management of **stress at work**. For example, in the Netherlands, an evaluation took place of the four-year tripartite Health and Safety Covenant concluded for the hotels and restaurants sector in June 2000 and aimed at reducing work-related stress (see [NL0602NU02](#) for full description of evaluation). This questionnaire-based survey was carried out by the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO) in 2000 and 2004: in 2000, the survey was based on a random sample of 8,000 employees in the sector; in 2004, it was conducted with a new sample comprising some 13,000 employees. The research found that that work-related stress in the hotels and restaurants sector declined by 13.2% between 2000 and 2004. More specifically, work-related stress fell by 10.1% for kitchen staff, 16.9% for waiting staff and 12.5% for the other groups. In addition, costs related to sickness absence were reduced by €7 million, or by 26%, over the four years.

### *Flexible working*

The presence of a works council appears to have an impact on working time flexibility in some countries. For example, in Germany, according to a telephone survey of the activities of over 2,000 works councils across all sectors and company sizes, carried out by the Institute of Economic and Social Research (Wirtschaft- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, WSI), more than 100 various forms of working time arrangements exist in companies with a works council. For example, some 51% of all establishments surveyed with a works council made use of opening clauses – which allow the parties to deviate from a higher-level agreement, for example, a sectoral agreement – to introduce various forms of working time flexibilisation; a further 15% of these establishments had reduced working time for a defined time period, while 26% had lengthened working time.

Similarly, in the United Kingdom (UK), the [Workplace Employment Relations Survey \(WERS\) 2004](#) found that large companies, those in the public sector and companies with trade unions – and therefore with social dialogue structures – were more likely to have flexible working policies in place than those without trade unions. However, it should be noted that trade unions are more prevalent in large companies and in the public sector and no further statistical testing was carried out to control for this.

In terms of granting leave, a survey entitled *Trends in collective bargaining in Malta: 1998–2003* found a correlation between the presence of a collective agreement and enhanced leave provision. The survey, carried out by the Centre for Labour Studies (CLS) at the [University of Malta](#), looked at collective agreements, the majority of which covered the five-year period between 1998 and 2003, and conducted interviews with trade union representatives, employers and human resource (HR) managers. It found that where trade unions and employers negotiate collective agreements, provisions on special leave – including maternity, adoption, birth, marriage, unpaid parental and paid jury service leave – go beyond the statutory provisions.

### *Equal opportunities*

Surveys in the area of **equal opportunities** focus on issues such as **equal pay**, the likelihood of companies having an equal opportunities policy in place, leave provision and the general promotion of **gender equality**.

In terms of equal opportunities policies, the aforementioned 2004 WERS in the UK found that companies with a trade union presence, and therefore social dialogue structures, were also more likely to have an equal opportunities policy in place and to have enhanced leave arrangements for employees with caring responsibilities than those without a trade union. Also in the UK, the link between having a trade union presence and providing equal opportunities is explored in a discussion paper (abstract, 174Kb PDF) published in 2002 by the Centre for Economic Performance (CEP) at

the London School of Economics and Political Science (Fernie and Gray, 2002). Using data from the 1998 Workplace Employee Relations Survey (WERS), the paper found that, after controlling for various factors, equal opportunities policies and their monitoring, together with ‘softer’ family-friendly policies, are strongly associated with trade union recognition. It also found that employees are least likely to have access to equal opportunities and family-friendly policies in workplaces which do not recognise a trade union or use HRM practices.

In Spain, the 2006 Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace, conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, MTAS), examined workers’ satisfaction with collective agreements, based on interviews with some 9,086 working people over the age of 16 who are living in family households. The survey found that respondents were most satisfied with the promotion of gender equality, showing a score of 7.2 out of 10 in the satisfaction rating; this compared with an overall average satisfaction score of 5.7 for all respondents covered by the survey, which included satisfaction with holidays and time off (7.1), as well as satisfaction with wages and supplements (5.5).

### *Training and skills development*

A number of surveys have highlighted a link between the presence of **employee representation** and access to, along with participation in, training and skills development. In Germany, for instance, a survey (in German) commissioned by the aforementioned IAB – based on a matched pair analysis of IAB establishment panel data (1996–2005) – found that participation in training was consistently higher in establishments with works councils, compared with those without works councils (Bellmann and Ellguth). Moreover, the participation rate increased in establishments with works councils after the reform of the Works Constitution Act (*Betriebsverfassungsgesetz*, BetrVG (in German, 128Kb PDF)), whereas it stagnated in companies without worker representation.

In Lithuania, a survey conducted in 2005 under the EU EQUAL initiative examined the issues of training and skills development for employees. Looking at enterprises with collective agreements and trade union representation, the survey found that a majority of respondents reported that improvement in qualification levels and the reskilling of employees were ensured by collective agreements. The agreements covered issues such as the skills development of older workers in particular.

In the UK, a considerable amount of research regarding the effects of a trade union presence on skills development and access to learning has been conducted. For example, a research paper (292Kb PDF), published by the Centre for Employment Relations, Innovation and Change (CERIC) at the University of Leeds and analysing data from the 2004 WERS, examined the potential effects of a trade union presence on training provision in the UK (Stuart and Robinson, 2007). The study found that trade union recognition has a consistently positive effect not only on the extent to which employees receive training opportunities, but also on the amount of training they receive. For instance, in workplaces recognising trade unions, employees are 8.1% more likely to report receiving training. The research also shows that workplaces are more likely to offer higher levels of employee training – defined as 10 or more days’ training a year – when they recognise trade unions, have some form of representative structure and where trade unions directly negotiate with management with regard to training.

Conversely, in Slovenia, a postal survey on HRM practices in Slovenian companies, sent to all organisations employing at least 200 employees and conducted by the Centre for Organisational and Human Resources Research (COHR) at the Faculty of Social Sciences in the University of Ljubljana in the spring of 2001 and 2004, asked the following question: ‘Who has the biggest influence on different aspects of training in the organisation?’ The results showed that trade unions, works councils or other similar bodies did not, in fact, have a significant influence on determining or assessing training needs, designing the training activities or carrying out the training. In all of these areas, line managers and the HRM department were instead deemed to have the most influence.

### *Precarious employment*

Some evidence exists regarding the potential effect that the presence of social dialogue structures can have on reducing precarious employment, in favour of more stable and open-ended types of employment. In Austria, for example, secondary analysis of a dataset comprising 96 call centres, which was presented in the form of a 2007 conference paper (Shire et al, 2007), found that the existence of employee representation, and therefore social dialogue, in Austrian call centres is clearly correlated with the reduction or even prevention of precarious employment.

### *Workplace partnership*

Some surveys of workplace partnership have been undertaken in countries where partnership has increased in popularity over the past two decades. In Ireland, for example, a 2002 managers' survey explored partnership arrangements in about 150 unionised companies (O'Dowd, 2002). The survey, which looked at management responses only, found positive outcomes in terms of improved relationships at the workplace, increased productivity and improved business performance. Other benefits emerged, although to a lesser extent, in terms of job satisfaction and improved pay and working conditions.

### **Qualitative research**

A range of qualitative research has been carried out on the issue of social dialogue and its effects on different aspects of working conditions. Much of this research is in the form of reports containing case studies which illustrate this connection.

In some countries, studies have shown the need for improving the role of social dialogue in the general area of working conditions. For example, a [study \(in Latvian, 7.92Mb PDF\)](#) on working conditions and risks in Latvia, published by [Inspecta](#) and carried out in 2005–2007 within the framework of the EU Structural Funds national programme on market research, found that social dialogue is not strong in the field of working conditions. In this study, employers and employees were asked for their views on social dialogue: both groups stated that worker representation is poor at company level, although it is better in large companies and in those that have been operating for a relatively long time (Inspecta, 2007). Overall, 49.2% of employer respondents stated that they discuss issues relating to working conditions with their employees; more specifically, 23.2% of them discuss working time and overtime work issues, 14.4% discuss the results of working environment risk assessments, 6.6% discuss work organisation issues and 14.5% discuss other issues related to working conditions.

In Germany, the role of works councils in helping to implement restructuring measures and changes in the work organisation is central to the debate on social dialogue at present. Kuhlmann et al (2004) argue that market changes increase interdependence between management and works councils, raising their need to cooperate when implementing restructuring measures and work organisation changes. In their view, good practice in this area involves both parties agreeing on the need for strong dialogue and substantial participation of the works council in conceptualising, agreeing and implementing changes in working time, work organisation and HR development, to promote and restructure the establishment by means of improving working conditions and worker participation. The authors carried out case study research on 22 companies in the automobile, chemical, machinery and electrical industries, consisting of written questionnaires and interviews with management, employees and works councils. In all cases, the restructuring led to an increase in social dialogue and company agreements. Moreover, the researchers found that, in some cases, the works council was also involved in planning the restructuring process. However, the works councils' involvement in the implementation of new practices varied substantially and was sometimes lower than had been planned. In some instances, their role in implementing new work practices was in fact substituted by external consultants.

Critics of this line of argument in Germany contend that it does not take into consideration the effects of the market and that the chances of 'win-win' cooperation between employers and

employee representatives are slim. Haipeter (2006) argues that the focus of research should be on the implementation of measures, rather than the conclusion of agreements, and that management is unlikely to put measures into practice that are not in the immediate company interest.

In terms of sectoral focus, many qualitative studies have tended to examine the construction sector, looking at occupational health and safety issues. Studies analysing issues such as the organisation of working time and flexible working tend to concentrate on the engineering, automotive and manufacturing industries. Other sectors analysed include the retail sector, the food industry and the temporary employment sector.

Some studies also look at the operation of social dialogue in SMEs, noting in many cases the difficulties involved in initiating and implementing good social dialogue in smaller companies; this is attributed to the fact that the necessary structures and willingness on both sides are not as readily available as they are in larger companies.

Some examples of qualitative research conducted in a range of countries are presented below, grouped according to subject area.

### *Occupational health and safety*

Much of the qualitative research available examines the issue of occupational health and safety. For example, in the UK, the Health and Safety Executive ([HSE](#)) publishes a considerable amount of qualitative research work in this area. A HSE report on stress management, entitled [Beacons of excellence in stress prevention \(883Kb PDF\)](#), reviews organisations, mainly in the public sector, that have adopted successful approaches to stress management at work (Jordon et al, 2003). In some cases, this has involved a process of dialogue involving trade unions. For example, the report cites Stockton Borough Council as an organisation that has adopted a partnership approach to stress prevention and overall workplace health and well-being. This organisation has created an employee health group comprising various advisors, including trade union representatives. A further example is the regional power supplier London Electricity, which is cited by the HSE as an organisation that has adopted a participative approach to ensuring that employees return to work after illness. For example, at the discretion of the employee, a meeting between the employee and a counsellor, line manager, HR representative and union official, where relevant, is set up to discuss changes needed in behaviour, workflow and workload, along with other threat-inducing factors. Thereafter, it is reported that the employee usually undertakes a 'phased return' to work. The report found that these 'round table' meetings can be highly effective in aiding the rehabilitation of employees with stress problems and in preventing or minimising sickness absence; at the same time, they help to highlight any shortfalls in management skills.

In Ireland, there is a long tradition of social partner involvement in and social dialogue on occupational health and safety issues. The most notable example concerns the establishment of the Construction Safety Partnership ([CSP](#)) in 2000, whose renewal is currently being negotiated. When the first CSP plan was launched in February 2000, following a safety crisis in the industry in the late 1990s, it was hailed as a breakthrough in safety in Ireland. The objectives of the first CSP plan involved the Irish government's enactment of regulations which required: the appointment of safety representatives on all sites with more than 20 workers; greater consultation; and the mandatory introduction of certain training provisions. Nevertheless, analysis of the list of measures set out in the original CSP plans indicate that while there have been successes, evidence of certain failures has also emerged. This includes the lack of initiative to keep the public informed of progress through the publication of quarterly reports – as promised by the former Minister for Labour Affairs and the former chair of the Irish Health and Safety Authority ([HSA](#)): just one report has been published since the partnership was established.

In terms of sector-specific studies on occupational health and safety, 2002 [research \(in Swedish, 110Kb PDF\)](#) from Sweden describes a trade union initiative undertaken in the construction industry. The initiative was introduced by the Swedish Building Workers' Union ([Byggnads](#)) in order to increase awareness of the benefits of an improved work environment. The main aim of the measure



was to significantly improve the work environment by highlighting the importance of local and regional safety representatives taking part in planning and follow-ups, to improve the work environment organisation. One finding that emerged was the need to improve the cooperation between local and regional safety representatives. The initiative also sought to increase the number of safety representatives. For example, as part of the initiative, workplaces were visited, particularly those with scaffolds and those using chemicals. The results of the inspections showed that only 56% of workplaces with scaffolds had instructions on how to assemble them correctly – a finding which was reflected in the fact that accidents due to falls were the most common type of work-related accident in 1999. During the project, the number of fall-related accidents within the house building, road and construction sectors decreased by almost 3,000 accidents, after having increased during 1998 and 1999. This decrease can at least partly be explained by the Byggnads initiative, since the inspections that took place during the project brought attention to the importance of assembling scaffolds correctly.

In Luxembourg, in the context of occupational health and safety, trade unions seem to focus more on psychosocial issues rather than health and safety matters. For example, the Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (Lëtzebuerger Chrëschtliche Gewerkschafts-Bond, LCGB) initiated the establishment of the not-for-profit organisation Mobbing asbl to help victims of mobbing and to raise awareness of this issue among employers. Furthermore, the Luxembourg Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (Onofhängege Gewerkschafts-Bond Lëtzebuerg, OGB-L) has been engaged in the evaluation of stress at work in Luxembourg.

A Latvian survey (in English, 1.4Mb PDF), carried out in 2004–2005 within the context of an ILO study on working and employment conditions in the new Member States (Vaughan-Whitehead, 2005), looks at social dialogue and working conditions in Latvia and includes findings that are specific to occupational health and safety (Hazans, 2005). The study features nine case studies, covering eight companies and one sector. It found that despite recent improvements in Latvia's legal and institutional environment and progress in improving working conditions, a significant proportion of workers remained exposed to serious risks in the workplace, while health and safety conditions were slow to improve. In addition, it discovered that social dialogue was absent in two cases, where trade unions were not present, while active social dialogue existed in four cases, including at a large bank. In one company, the workers did not participate in social dialogue; in another, workers reported that social dialogue had a limited impact, while in two cases (including the sector case study), the workers reported that the influence of trade unions was declining.

Another new Member State – Bulgaria – is highlighted by an ILO survey as a country showing examples of favourable occupational health and safety-specific social dialogue institutions, procedures and mechanisms. In fact, according to the study, it is the only southeast European country that conducts social dialogue on occupational health and safety at national, branch and regional levels. The study observes that the representative social partner organisations play an important role in driving occupational health and safety processes in the country through their participation in formulating and implementing policy at all levels. However, the report notes that cooperation at branch and regional levels leaves much to be desired. The main obstacles appear to be a dearth of employer organisations in some branches and regions, along with a lack of desire for bipartite cooperation at these levels. Moreover, while occupational health and safety issues seem to be included in the bargaining process to various degrees in individual branch, company and municipal collective agreements, the report notes that the provisions of the majority of these agreements do not go beyond minimum standards and often merely reiterate statutory provisions.

### *Occupational health and safety in SMEs*

Research in some countries has focused on the specific issue of social dialogue on occupational health and safety matters in SMEs. Most often, the discussion focuses on the problems of social dialogue in these types of companies, although some research also observes examples of good practice.

In Denmark, qualitative studies have shown that there is room for improvement in terms of social dialogue on occupational health and safety in SMEs. For example, a report by the National Centre for Workplace Health Promotion (Nationalt Center for Sundhedsfremme på Arbejdspladsen, NCSA) in 2004 highlights the lack of sufficient knowledge and experience or methods on how to promote health issues in SMEs. Similarly, another Danish study on the work environment in SMEs in the cleaning industry, carried out by the Centre for Alternative Social Analysis (Center for Alternativ Samfundsanalyse, CASA) in 2001 for the Sector Safety Council for Services (Branchearbejdsmiljørådet for Service og Tjenesteydelser, BAR Service), found that issues connected with the working environment were not dealt with by safety committees, but rather by management on an ad hoc basis, without formal dialogue. This lack of formal social dialogue is thought to be due to managers assigning lower priority to the work environment, compared with other tasks; moreover, establishing a safety committee is costly for enterprises and it can be difficult to find employees who are willing to participate in the safety committee.

In contrast, research from Sweden highlights how social dialogue in SMEs can make a real difference to occupational health and safety in terms of preventing injuries (Frick and Walters, 1998). An example is given from the baking industry, where serious hand injuries from machinery accidents are frequently reported. In cooperation with the country's labour inspectorate, regional safety representatives launched a campaign highlighting the dangers of inadequately protected baking machinery. The campaign resulted in sick leave due to machine-related injuries decreasing from 2,500–3,000 days a year during 1989–1992 to 1,500–2,000 days a year during 1993–1996. Nevertheless, the study notes that even if regional safety representatives are thought to have had a major role in this achievement, it is difficult to measure their exact contribution.

Another example from Sweden involves the retail sector, where many workers are exposed to repetitive strain injuries. In this sector, regional safety representatives' involvement has often been positively assessed by shop owners. Overall, this research contains a discussion on whether social dialogue, which is needed to implement occupational health and safety policies, has the same effect in small enterprises as in large companies. It notes that the dialogue within small enterprises is limited compared with that in large companies, as often there is no established forum, a limited availability of training to meet the needs of regional safety representatives, and little support from preventative occupational health services. If, for example, conflict over health and safety matters occurs between regional safety representatives and employers in small enterprises, no obvious procedure for mediation is available, as it is in larger enterprises with established safety committees.

### *Working time and flexible working*

Some qualitative research is available on the influence of social dialogue on the organisation of working time and on flexible working practices. For example, in Germany, a qualitative survey on the implementation of innovative collective agreements on working time, based on five case studies in the information technology (IT), aircraft and research and development sectors, found that the agreements on flexible working time achieved very different outcomes in terms of greater job satisfaction and improved health and safety if the works council is actively involved in their implementation and if communication with individual employees is taken seriously (Haipeter and Lehndorff, 2004).

A Slovenian case study shows how trade unions have been willing to agree to flexible working patterns that benefit the employer, in order to secure shift working and overtime working premia for the workforce (Stanojević et al, 2006). The study was part of an international qualitative research project, coordinated by the Warwick Business School (WBS) in the UK and financed by the UK Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC). It focused on employment practices in German and US multinational companies in the automotive industry in central and eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary and Slovenia). The Slovenian case study found evidence of high functional and working time flexibility, developed within the context of a high level of employment security rights, and due to high levels of internal integration of employees and worker representatives. The study emphasises the role of trade unions and other worker representatives in trading off flexible working time

arrangements in companies – such as shift work, weekend work and overtime work at short notice – in exchange for good rates of overtime pay and shift premia. As these premia supplement wages considerably, workers are keen to perform shift and overtime work and the trade unions therefore act in accordance with employee wishes, resulting in increased working time and functional flexibility.

In Finland, social dialogue has played a significant role in increasing well-being in workplaces, through the government-led Well-Being at Work Programme 2000–2003. This project supported some 170 development projects at workplaces and initiated eight new research projects. The programme's qualitative research projects included studies on the effectiveness of good practice on: flexible working hour arrangements; the monitoring of human resources and their utilisation; well-being at work among young adults; well-being at work among older employees; and the economic impact of well-being at work. These research projects demonstrated that well-being at work requires determined, systematic development efforts from all parties involved.

One particular study (abstract) among these looked at flexible working time arrangements in 26 workplaces in Finland (Uhmavaara and Jokivouri, 2003). It includes descriptions of working time models and well-being at work. The study demonstrates that workplace-specific working time practices, when they work well, have succeeded in increasing the profitability of enterprises and the well-being of their employees. One of the most interesting examples of this is the 'four-shift' working time arrangement at the Fazer Bakery Oululainen in the northern Finnish city of Lahti. This system is designed for workers aged over 50 and allows them to work for three weeks and then have one week off; however, the employer may call the workers back to work during their week off in times of peak demand. The employees are reportedly happy with the four-shift arrangement, as it allows them to have a week's holiday in every month. The employer admits that the system is more expensive than the conventional three-shift system, but maintains that workforce motivation has increased notably, while the number of days' sickness has decreased and employees are able to work until the age of retirement. The system is based on trust and is therefore a good example of local-level social dialogue and cooperation. In the food industry in Finland, flexibility cannot be achieved by extending the working day, as employees cannot work more than eight hours a day.

### *Labour market*

In countries such as the Netherlands, labour market issues are at the forefront of the social policy debate. In this particular country, the demand for employable workers is great due to the ageing of the workforce. As a result, a number of studies have been conducted on how to increase the employability of groups such as unemployed older workers, young workers, people with disabilities and migrant workers. For example, the Social and Economic Council of the Netherlands (Sociaal-Economische Raad, SER) has issued a report (summary) on improving the labour market position of young people from ethnic minority groups in the Netherlands, focusing on increasing their skills, removing language and educational barriers and raising their participation in work placement and apprenticeship schemes (SER, 2007).

### *Partnership working*

A significant amount of case study-based research on the operation of partnership working and on **information and consultation** at workplace level has been carried out in Ireland. This country, along with the UK and some of the new EU Member States, needed to formulate new legislation to comply with Directive 2002/14/EC establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community, as it did not have a generalised, statutory system of information and consultation in place before the directive came into force. An example of such research is a study conducted by a team of academics from the National University of Ireland Galway (NUI Galway), which examined information and consultation arrangements in 15 Irish case study organisations – encompassing the private and public sectors and trade union and non-union organisations – and the extent of social dialogue provided (Dundon, 2003). Dundon found that many of the information and consultation arrangements studied consisted of weak one-way or two-way direct information and communication systems – such as newsletters, workplace meetings, staff

briefings and emails – under which employees had little say in matters affecting them. He concluded that partnership-oriented information and consultation methods were most effective when they were integrated, when direct and indirect methods were combined, when senior management strongly endorsed practices, and when informal dialogue supported formal arrangements. This research was updated in 2006, when it was found that only two of the 32 cases analysed could be described as robust partnerships with strong employee representative forums (Dundon et al, 2006).

In addition, Dobbins (2007) undertook research comprised of two qualitative in-depth case studies on workplace partnership arrangements in Ireland, which mainly examined the relationship between workplace social dialogue and working conditions, in terms of the impact on worker experiences and industrial relations outcomes. In the first case study, which concerned a glass-manufacturing plant, the management made an attempt to introduce a workplace partnership after a 10-year period of adversarial industrial relations. Workers experienced a mixture of costs and benefits as a result: despite the mutual gains obtained, the balance of gains tended to favour management. This was partly due to the fact that key aspects of partnership were missing – notably, employment security, opportunities for direct worker participation at the point of production, and harmonised single status terms and conditions of employment. Significantly, the move towards workplace social dialogue enabled management to introduce workplace change more effectively and at a faster pace than was possible under the previous adversarial climate.

In the second case study, concerning an alumina refinery plant, the benefits of the new partnership approach for workers outweighed the costs. The refinery plant has a full range of partnership practices – in particular, management-union partnership, semi-autonomous teamwork, training, gain sharing, annualised hours, communications, single status provisions, and an employment security clause. The workers responded positively to these measures and experienced increased workplace participation. However, they were also subjected to new indirect management controls, which have brought new demands, such as tighter performance targets. On the whole, however, the workers seem to have accepted the stricter performance standards and increased effort in a pragmatic way, because they perceive that management is more competent at organising work. Considerable evidence has emerged that trust, job satisfaction and commitment have increased substantially. Moreover, labour productivity appears to have improved considerably, while grievances, conflict, absenteeism and accident rates have declined.

## **Administrative reports**

The labour inspectorates or health and safety authorities in most EU countries produce reports on the occupational health and safety situation in their country. However, studies that mention the absence of social dialogue are rare. One exception is Sweden, where the Swedish Work Environment Authority ([Arbetsmiljöverket](#)) produced a [report \(in Swedish, 266Kb PDF\)](#) in 2001, examining the work environment of employees working for temporary employment agencies (Sundh-Nygård and Edqvist, 2001). The report presented the findings from inspections of temporary agencies' internal controls over the work environment. A total of 193 workplaces were inspected, covering some 37 temporary work agencies, with inspections carried out both in the agencies and the user companies. The aim of the project was to prevent stress at work. The findings revealed limited knowledge about the working environment among managers and supervisors working at temporary agencies, along with the absence of a forum for cooperation between managers and supervisors; this, in turn, made it more difficult to obtain and share information about the work environment.

A lack of social dialogue has also been highlighted in administrative reports in France. In one such report, the General Inspectorate of Social Affairs (Inspection générale des affaires sociales, [IGAS](#)) criticises the role of the social partners in occupational health and safety, stating that many bodies in which the social partners participate at national and local levels do not play a leading role in the definition of priorities in the area of prevention (Zeggar et al, 2003). Criticism has also been voiced in relation to regional technical committees in the Nord Pas-de-Calais region in northern France, with the IGAS stating that these committees are dormant, do not have the resources to function and

are difficult to manage. The inspectorate also points to the problem of low trade union representation in commissions that monitor the occupational health service.

Shortcomings in the election and duties of employee representatives in occupational health and safety matters have also been observed by the Estonian Labour Inspectorate (Tööinspeksioon), which produces annual reports. A survey of companies where problems had been uncovered found that about half of these companies did not have a working environment specialist appointed by the employer, while around 40% did not have an elected working environment representative. Furthermore, about a third of these companies did not have a working environment council in place, which is mandatory in all companies with more than 50 employees. Nevertheless, it should be noted that these companies had already been identified as having problematic practices; therefore, the data should not be taken as representative of the situation in Estonia as a whole.

In Denmark, research has highlighted a range of problems relating to the organisation of social dialogue in workplace-level safety committees. In many enterprises, working conditions are discussed in the safety committee, but it is often the case that the safety committee does not draw up an action plan on how to implement what has been discussed in the meetings, with many enterprises stating that they are better at locating problems than actually solving them. Other issues in Denmark include the view that management and employee representatives are often insufficiently trained to deal with issues relating to the work environment.

In Belgium, the health and safety inspectorate, which is part of the Federal Public Service Employment, Labour and Social Dialogue (FPS), states in its annual report for 2005 that it is often difficult to consult workplace representation when they inspect a company on site, due to issues including the lack of a spokesperson assigned by the representation, the absence of representation in the company, or the inspector's decision that this contact would bring no added value to the inspection.

Some reports do include data examining social dialogue and its potential impact on occupational health and safety. In the UK, for instance, the HSE has looked at organisations that have adopted a participative approach to health and safety and that have worked with trade union representatives. One interesting finding, cited in a 2005 HSE report (1.18Mb PDF) on workplace injury, is that trade union members and consultation committee members exhibit significantly higher rates of workplace injury than those who are not members of such organisations, at 2.1% compared with 1.1% among non-members (Davies and Jones, 2005). However, the report notes that this is probably due to the fact that trade union membership is likely to be relatively more concentrated in traditional heavy industries, which in turn are characterised by more hazardous occupations. In addition, the report found that, after controlling for other factors, trade union members are 49% more likely than non-union members to report having had a reportable workplace injury. This may be partly due to the fact that employees in the most risky occupations may join trade unions as a means of insurance.

In terms of the issues discussed by social partners, a 2005 analysis jointly conducted by the Danish Working Environment Authority (Arbejdstilsynet, AT), COWI, a consultancy specialising in the areas of engineering, environmental science and economics, the Danish Technological Institute (Teknologisk Institut) and the Danish Institute of Governmental Research (Anvendt Kommunalforskning, AKF) indicates that social dialogue within Danish safety committees at workplace level deals mostly with ergonomics and the physical work environment; this is because psychosocial work environment issues seem to be more difficult to get onto the agenda for discussion.

### *Sectoral aspects*

In the context of research that adopts a sectoral focus, administrative reports tend to examine sectors in which occupational risks are thought to be highest – such as the mining, construction and agriculture sectors. In Luxembourg, for example – as in Poland – the mining sector stands out as a sector where occupational health and safety reports centre on issues such as the risks posed by noxious dust particles in coal mines.

Administrative reports also tend to focus on sectors with a high proportion of small companies, such as hotels, catering outlets and restaurants. Furthermore, in Greece, the retail trade sector was highlighted as an area of focus for occupational health and safety inspection, due to reports of labour legislation violations and the precarious employment situation of some workers in this sector.

In Norway, in 2005, the Labour Inspection Authority (Arbeidstilsynet) undertook an inspection campaign of 22 public hospitals and five private hospitals. One of the outcomes of this campaign was the need for stronger involvement on the part of company-level social partners – in particular, when defining the level of cooperation regarding the work environment and identifying the extent to which there is a common opinion on work environment challenges.

### *Gender aspects*

EU legislation in the area of occupational health and safety has a gender dimension, with the result that all Member States are obliged to have legislation in place covering areas such as health protection measures for pregnant or breastfeeding employees. Labour inspectors are responsible for monitoring and ensuring compliance with this legislation. Moreover, trade unions in many countries are active in ensuring that the health of female employees and the overall gender dimension of occupational health and safety is placed on the social dialogue agenda. In Slovakia, for instance, the Institute for Labour and Family Research (Inštitút pre výskum práce a rodiny, IVPR) has been active in providing information about the gender dimension of occupational health and safety, in cooperation with the National Labour Inspectorate (Národný inšpektorát práce, NIP) and the Regional Office of Public Health in the Banská Bystrica region in central Slovakia. Other organisations in Slovakia that have placed the gender dimension on the agenda include gender equality pressure groups and a range of tripartite and bipartite interest groups.

Many administrative reports include statistics and research themes that look at the gender dimension of occupational health and safety. In the UK, for example, the HSE found that accident rates for both male and female workers have fallen steadily since 1993, although in the case of female workers, they have fallen less dramatically and from a lower base.

### *Social dialogue in SMEs*

In Slovakia, the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family (Ministerstvo práce, sociálnych vecí a rodiny Slovenskej republiky, MPSVR SR) is responsible for labour inspection in the country and produces an annual report on occupational health and safety and labour inspection activities. According to these reports, social dialogue in the area of occupational health and safety is inadequate in small companies, due to the fact that employee representatives are infrequently nominated and owing to a low level of cooperation between employers and employees. The reports note that this can be linked to a lack of interest among employees, along with fears that they might lose their job if they are seen to be too active.

In Hungary, the National Strategy Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2006–2008 (in English, 380Kb PDF), prepared by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour (Szociális és Munkaügyi Minisztérium, SZMM) and the Ministry of Health (Egészségügyi Minisztérium, EÜM), with cooperation from other relevant ministries and organisations, found that safety representatives only operate effectively in larger companies and primarily in those where trade unions are also present.

### *Role of labour inspectorates*

In some countries, the labour inspectorates can play an important role in encouraging social dialogue. In Portugal, for example, the General Labour Inspectorate (Inspeção-Geral do Trabalho, IGT) has been involved in organising seminars and other meetings for social partners in the construction sector. In Romania, the Labour Inspection Office (Inspekția Muncii, IM) works to support the development and expansion of social dialogue structures, aiming to increase the social

partners' involvement at decision-making level and in implementation activities. The IM also organises awareness campaigns and exchanges of good practice.

In Italy, local-level occupational health services and the National Workplace Accident Insurance Institute (Istituto Nazionale Assicurazione contro gli Infortuni sul Lavoro, INAIL) play a prominent role both in advising organisations and providing information on occupational health and safety matters. Furthermore, INAIL promotes an initiative involving a reduction of insurance premia for companies that succeed in reducing both work-related accidents and occupational diseases, by means of training activities, advice and environmental analysis in cooperation with universities; the initiative is jointly financed by the company and INAIL.

Labour inspectorates in the Czech Republic are by law authorised to inspect compliance with legal regulations that establish rights and obligations in labour relations for employers, employees, the appropriate trade union body or works council, as well as occupational health and safety representatives. It should be noted that as labour inspectorates were established as a separate authority only relatively recently in the Czech Republic (2005), their role with regard to social dialogue is, in practice, still taking shape. Nevertheless, they carry out a basic notification function and, in cases where employers refuse to negotiate with trade unions, draw attention to the employer's obligation to enter into negotiations. However, they do not have the authority to force employers to participate in collective bargaining.

In Luxembourg, the Mines and Labour Inspectorate (Inspection du Travail et des Mines, ITM) plays an important role in terms of information and informal mediation for social partners in the mining sector; it also provides advice to employer representatives, as well as information and guidance to employee representatives. The ITM contributes to the smooth functioning of social dialogue bodies by seeking to provide the actors with a better knowledge of legal provisions and means of appeal and action. In addition, it is responsible for the implementation of legislation on social dialogue structures in companies in Luxembourg. A dedicated service within the inspectorate is responsible for this function and may intervene in companies on request. The ITM also gives training courses for social dialogue actors.

Finally, in Austria, the labour inspectorate (Arbeitsinspektion, AI) has been actively involved in trying to encourage social dialogue on a sectoral basis, through so-called 'focus activities'. The most prominent of these activities was a five-year health and safety campaign (2000–2005) in the bakeries sector; the initiative was run in close cooperation with the Austrian Federal Guild of Bakers, the Austrian Federal Economic Chamber (Wirtschaftskammer Österreich, WKO) and Austrian trade unions. The aim of the campaign was to reduce farina powder (dust) exposure – which is the main cause of so-called 'allergic bakery asthma' – through targeted and consistent information, consultancy and inspection. The campaign was considered a success: on the one hand, it brought about concrete outcomes – including increased information provision to all bakeries in Austria, the upgrading of technical equipment such as extraction fans, the introduction of a new prototype of farina sieve, documentation of good practice examples, long-term reduction of farina powder exposure in many bakeries and the production of a documentary for dissemination purposes; a second key success factor was the close cooperation and involvement of the social partners, both in the design and implementation of the campaign.

## Case study examples

This section of the report looks at case study examples of where social dialogue has had an actual impact on working conditions, examining case studies at national, sectoral and company level. In terms of national-level social dialogue, the outcomes usually have an impact on social dialogue at sectoral and/or company level. Overall, the case studies have been grouped thematically, with the exception of the section on company-level social dialogue.

The first part of this section focuses on successful examples of social dialogue. The second part looks at examples of where social dialogue has either broken down or not achieved the desired results, and assesses the reasons for this, identifying factors affecting its success or failure. The final part explores the views of the social partners on the type, nature and quality of social dialogue, in terms of its influence on working conditions.

## Examples of successful social dialogue

### *Working time and flexibility*

One of the major influences of social dialogue in the area of working time has been the reduction of the working week. The most notable example in this instance is France, where social dialogue at sectoral and company level has led to the introduction of the statutory 35-hour week. Other examples include Slovakia, where the average collectively-agreed working week has been falling steadily in recent years, particularly for workers on continuous shifts whose weekly working time has dropped from 36.41 hours in 2002 to 33.6 hours in 2006.

In many cases, the social dialogue process has been successful in having an impact on working time flexibility, particularly at company level. One such example, identified by the Commission for Local Authority Employers (Kunnallinen työmarkkinalaitos, KT), can be found in Finland, where autonomous work rotas were introduced at the municipal hospital Jorvi. This programme of working time autonomy was launched in order to introduce flexibility to a formerly rather inflexible shift work schedule. Under the new system, shifts are planned in conjunction with employees, taking into account individual needs for different working times. Previously, the hospital management was solely in charge of working time schedules.

The scheme has been put in place within the framework of Finnish legislation on working time and expands employees' working time options from the previously fixed schedule running from 08.00 to 16.00 hours each day to a schedule with a flexible start time from 07.00 hours and a flexible finish time up to 18.00 hours. The new scheme has reportedly improved customer service and allowed for more individualised working hours, negotiated within the regulatory limits and taking employees' needs into account.

An important requirement of the scheme was to ensure that it also allowed for the work to be carried out satisfactorily, while maintaining the highest degree of patient welfare. For employees, the aim was to improve their well-being and to enhance the recruitment of skilled workers in the future. In addition, it is expected that the project will have a positive influence on work organisation and the availability of services offered. So far, the results have been promising and the pilot scheme has been extended. Both employees and customers are reportedly more satisfied now than they were under the previous working time model. At the same time, the employees are said to be more committed to their work, while productivity has risen. In light of its success, the project received an award from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (OSHA).

### *Improving occupational health and safety*

Improving occupational health and safety in the workplace is a key challenge for the social partners at all levels and is an area where there is a significant amount of activity. The following section looks at social dialogue in this area at both national and sectoral levels.



## National-level social dialogue

Although the focus of this study is on bipartite social dialogue, some interesting examples of national tripartite social dialogue are also evident. For instance, national social dialogue plays a prominent role in the regulation of a range of working conditions in Belgium, where the key occupational health and safety event of the past decade was the renewed codification of occupational health and safety regulations in the mid 1990s. Although this regulatory amendment was prompted by the need to comply with EU directives, a range of innovations was nevertheless introduced through national social dialogue; consultations and negotiations between representatives of the government, employer organisations and trade unions, as well as administrative and other experts, were the driving force behind these amendments. The most notable results of this process were a greater focus on prevention and a broadening of the occupational health and safety concept to encompass well-being at work. Another major innovation was the legal provision of external services for health and safety prevention and protection on the shop floor, an important aspect of which was the multidisciplinary prevention approach. This contrasts with the approach of the former inter-company health services, which mainly focused on the ‘curative’ aspect of occupational health and safety. Although opinions differ regarding the quality and impact of these services, the general view is that these services have contributed to the greater ‘professionalisation’ of occupational health and safety policies in Belgian companies, particularly in SMEs.

Another example of tripartite national social dialogue can be seen in Cyprus, where a Declaration on Occupational Safety and Health was signed on 15 May 1995. According to the social partners, up until then the issue of safety and health at work was relatively neglected; as a result, a number of serious problems arose, the most important of which was an increase in workplace accidents. Within this context, the declaration is an example of good practice, not only regarding the extent to which it helped create the existing statutory framework, but also because it was achieved through the consent and commitment of virtually all of the social partners in Cyprus. In addition to representatives from the Cypriot Ministry of Labour and Social Insurance (Υπουργείου Εργασίας και Κοινωνικών Ασφαλίσεων, MLSI), the agreement was signed on behalf of all of the main employer and employee organisations. In terms of the content of the agreement, the social partners set out a framework of general principles in order to define the basic obligations of employers, workers and the state in relation to occupational health and safety, as well as the issue of consultation, along with principles concerning the social partners’ participation on committees, councils and boards. The agreement is based on a range of factors, including the need for full compliance with ILO Convention 155 on occupational health and safety, and for the gradual adaptation and harmonisation of national legislation, standards and mechanisms for control and compliance with the EU directives on occupational health and safety. Key goals of the declaration include:

- the development and dissemination of knowledge in relation to occupational hazards and prevention techniques;
- education and the acquisition of skills for the prevention of occupational hazards;
- the promotion of working conditions that will improve the quality of life at work and companies’ competitiveness;
- the organisation of activities to ensure the monitoring and implementation of workplace health and safety.

Key areas of social partner commitment in terms of the declaration’s implementation include the following measures:

- the evaluation, promotion and introduction of policies, objectives and measures in the area of occupational health and safety at national level will be carried out through tripartite consultation and discussion, with the participation of the MLSI and the employer and workers’ organisations, in the context of the Labour Advisory Board;

- organisations representing other stakeholders, such as self-employed people and farmers, will be able to express their views within the framework of the tripartite consultation mechanism on issues of concern or interest to them;
- the declaration constitutes the fundamental framework that will guide the state's actions in the area of health and safety at work in relation to its obligation to form policy, set objectives and promote the necessary legislative, organisational and administrative measures. It will also establish a meaningful framework of rights and obligations for employers and workers;
- the signatories of the declaration will undertake to collaborate on its implementation, making a commitment to contribute to the country's modernisation and socioeconomic progress.

Many of the new EU Member States have favourable tripartite cooperation at national level. This is the case in Hungary, for example, where occupational health and safety is dealt with by the national Occupational Health and Safety Committee, which is a permanent professional body of the tripartite National Interest Reconciliation Council (Országos Érdekegyeztető Tanács, OÉT). The committee is composed of representatives of employee and employer organisations, as well as the government, and its duties are set by the Hungarian Labour Protection Act. Overall, the main task of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee is to undertake macro-level interest concertation on issues of occupational health and safety and acts on the basis of its own agenda. Moreover, the committee makes decisions on the use of funds collected through penalties paid by employers that have contravened occupational health and safety rules. It also prepares the annual national-level programme of health and safety. Since 2005, the committee has been acting on the basis of a more flexible agenda, offering the possibility of flexible cooperation and the establishment of working groups. In addition, the committee makes a significant contribution to the formulation of legislative initiatives relating to occupational health and safety; it has issued opinions on relevant matters and acts as a key body in representing the interests of the social partners. Interest concertation in the committee has contributed to formulating an annual schedule for Hungary's national occupational health and safety programme.

Employer representatives in Hungary have criticised the government for placing more emphasis on labour control than on improving health and safety. However, the introduction of regional health and safety inspectors may remedy this situation. According to employee representatives, the new agenda of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee may help to overcome legitimacy problems, while the concentration of responsibilities may help to prevent conflicts.

A further example of national-level social dialogue on occupational health and safety can be found in Poland. In late 2006, the Central Institute for Labour Protection (Centralny Instytut Ochrony Pracy – Państwowy Instytut Badawczy, CIOP-PIB) presented to the Labour Protection Council (Rada Ochrony Pracy, ROP) a report on the new EU strategy for occupational health and safety from 2007 to 2012. This report highlighted the need for the CIOP-PIB to adopt measures aimed at encouraging the government to prepare a nationwide programme for the improvement of health and safety in the workplace. Owing to the measures taken in response to this call, the Polish government presented, in April 2007, a draft programme outlining the steps needed to bring Poland's occupational health and safety in line with the standards of the 'older' 15 EU Member States (EU15). This document was subsequently passed on to the representative trade unions and employer organisations for their comments. It is hoped that occupational health and safety levels in Poland can be improved, with the appropriate coordination and sustained implementation monitoring by the social partners, among other bodies.

In Norway, further evidence of successful national-level social dialogue can be seen in the area of occupational health and safety. This is reflected in the signing of the aforementioned IW-Agreement on an inclusive working life in October 2001, and in the range of activities undertaken in this framework agreement; the agreement was subsequently renewed from 1 January 2006 for the period 2006–2009 (NO0110107F, NO0311104F, NO0601101N). The IW-Agreement has been hailed as the most comprehensive example of social dialogue on working conditions at present. Its main aims are to reduce sickness absence and the number of people on disability pension by, among other

things, making adjustments to the workplace. Other goals include encouraging older workers to remain in the labour market for longer and improving the employment situation of migrant workers. The parties to the agreement encompass representatives of the main trade union confederations and employer organisations in Norway, and the government. In total, nine employer and employee organisations are involved, covering all areas of the labour market.

Thus, this central-level framework agreement covers all sectors and organisations. In addition, companies and establishments sign individual agreements with the local offices of the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Organisation (Arbeids- og velferdsforvaltningen, NAV). The implication is that not all companies affiliated to employer organisations are IW companies, while not all IW companies are necessarily affiliated to employer organisations. Under the agreement, the social partners at sectoral and national level aim to increase the recruitment of companies into the IW-Agreement and to distribute information on IW activities. In addition, the national-level social partner confederations aim to develop new instruments, in conjunction with the relevant public bodies. These include measures aimed at ensuring closer monitoring of employees on sick leave and the establishment of NAV workplace centres to advise companies on issues such as sickness absence and older workers.

The main focus of IW activities is at company level. Individual firms sign up by concluding company-level agreements with the local NAV workplace centres. This gives employers access to a number of special measures or assistance from the NAV offices. The importance of involving shop stewards and safety officials in the IW activities at company level is stressed in the agreement, as well as by the social partners more generally.

Whether or not the IW-Agreement has been successful is open to considerable debate, especially as reductions in sickness absence rates have not been as substantial as assumed in the first IW-Agreement. However, all of the Norwegian social partners support the agreement (NO0609019I, NO0611029I) and argue that its introduction, along with the involvement of the social partners, have contributed to increased awareness of the challenges of establishing an inclusive working life; at the same time, it has also substantially changed the way in which employers, employees and doctors deal with sickness absence. In addition, the trade unions highlight that the agreement has contributed to strengthening their position and that of employee representatives with regard to issues such as sickness absence and older workers, as the agreement states that the social partners should cooperate on these matters.

## **Sectoral-level social dialogue**

In addition to national-level social dialogue on occupational health and safety in the workplace, numerous examples of sectoral-level social dialogue can be found regarding this issue. In one such example, from Denmark, social dialogue is initiated at sectoral level and then transferred to company level.

In December 2006, the Central Organisation for Industrial Employees (Centralorganisationen af industriansatte, CO-industri) and the Confederation of Danish Industries (Dansk Industri, DI) launched a joint campaign aimed at reducing sickness absence in their member companies. According to CO-industri and DI statistics, some 140,000 Danes are absent from the workplace every day due to illness. The campaign, which is a two-year pilot project, aims to reduce sickness absence by 1%. Seven companies of different sizes and production volumes have volunteered to take part in the project. The cooperation committees (*Samarbejdsudvalg*, SUs) in individual companies will examine the issues surrounding sickness absence and its causes, as well as working together with other SUs during the pilot. The work undertaken between management and employee representatives within the SUs will be supported by cooperation consultants from CO-industri and DI. In particular, the SUs will analyse the physical and the psychosocial work environment, in an effort to find indicators for high levels of sickness absence.

Another example of social dialogue at sectoral level which has had a positive influence on occupational health and safety can be seen in Romania's wood industry. In 2005, the social partners

launched a social dialogue campaign aimed at improving the working environment, following an analysis of work-related accidents in the industry, which showed a high risk of accidents between 2001 and 2004. The social partners' actions led to a significant reduction in both the number and seriousness of accidents the following year.

In order to increase employees' and employers' awareness of the minimum health and safety requirements needed to ensure a healthy and safe working environment, the social partners organised a range of activities, including information and training activities for the social partners themselves. An initiative was also undertaken to establish, at company level, a cooperation model between employer organisations, trade unions and companies in the industry, as well as with the local state institutions, based on the Logical Framework Approach, which focuses on objectives. In addition, round table discussions were held in 10 Romanian counties, in which employers and employees from 120 companies and social partner representatives participated; the discussions covered issues such as stress and the management of the working environment, the psychology of stress, noise as a stress factor, and neuropsychosensorial strain at work.

An evaluation of the activities was carried out in 2005: accordingly, 70% of employers rated the initiative as very good, 20% as good and 10% as satisfactory; some 65% of employees rated the activities as very good, 25% as good and 10% as satisfactory.

According to the IM, analysis of the number of work-related accidents in the industry during the first nine months of 2005, the implementation period of the project, compared with the same period in 2004, revealed a significant decrease in the number and seriousness of work-related accidents. More specifically:

- the total number of work-related accidents fell from 257 accidents in 2004 to 157 in 2005, a decrease of 39%;
- the number of work-related accidents leading to temporary work incapacity dropped from 237 accidents in 2004 to 146 in 2005, a reduction of 38%;
- the number of work-related accidents leading to invalidity fell from six in 2004 to one in 2005, a decrease of 83%;
- the number of fatal work-related accidents dropped from 14 in 2004 to 10 in 2005, a reduction of 29%;
- the total number of lost working days per 1,000 workers decreased by 44%.

A further example of occupational health and safety social dialogue at sectoral level can be found in Spain. In this country, a collective agreement has been signed in order to regulate the terms and conditions and health and safety of workers employed by the construction companies that will be undertaking work for the 2008 World Fair in Zaragoza in northeastern Spain – a fair focusing on the importance of sustainable development and the politics of water. Throughout the preparation process, the regional representatives of the main trade unions in Spain have participated in several rounds of social dialogue in order to negotiate the terms and conditions governing work for the fair. ExpoAgua Zaragoza, the consortium of companies that will build the fair, has signed an agreement with the most representative regional trade unions – namely, the Trade Union Confederation of Workers' Commissions (Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras, CC.OO), Aragón and UGT Aragón. The regional government of Aragón also signed the agreement and its involvement is deemed to have been crucial for achieving consensus.

The goal of the agreement is to set the labour conditions for all workers employed by the companies working for the fair, focusing on minimising the number of work-related accidents and fatal accidents during the construction phase. The case has been highlighted as an example of good practice by the Spanish Collective Bargaining Observatory (Observatorio de la Negociación Colectiva) of CC.OO.

The main areas covered by the agreement include: health and safety regulations; limits on **outsourcing**; a focus on high quality working conditions; a commitment to adequate training for workers; and an assurance to give priority of employment to workers from the Aragón region. The

agreement has been deemed a highly successful outcome of social dialogue in the construction sector, where achieving social dialogue results has proved difficult in the past. The limits placed on outsourcing has been considered a particular success of the agreement.

A final example of sectoral-level social dialogue on occupational health and safety can be seen in the Netherlands. Between 2001 and 2005, an initiative was introduced in this country to help reduce the levels of stress and sickness absence in the police service. This followed a study, carried out in 2000, which showed that stress was a problem in the sector and that sickness absence was relatively high at 9.4%. The activities involved collecting relevant information; setting up an information centre on working conditions, absenteeism from work and return to work after absence; providing support to police departments on issues such as prevention and safety, in particular for case managers, occupational health services and occupational health physicians; and the launch of a campaign aimed at highlighting the positive aspects of work. A stress meter was also developed, alongside a number of initiatives designed to help employees in stressful situations. Specific actions included health checks for police officers and a risk assessment for the entire sector.

The initiative was subsequently evaluated and has reportedly led to a reduction in sickness absence, down to 6%, and in exposure to psychosocial risks. The risk assessment element of the initiative was evaluated to be a success, but the health check was not as successful: it is thought that the police service is not yet ready to apply this instrument.

### **Company-level social dialogue**

In the UK, the independent research organisation Incomes Data Services (IDS) published a case study looking at how stress is tackled at London Underground (LU), which operates the tube transport system in the UK's capital city (IDS, 2006). LU, controlled by Transport for London, employs over 12,500 workers. It has been found that stress-related absence is the primary cause of absenteeism among LU's employees. As a result, the company has introduced a range of measures over the past three years, in consultation with the trade unions, including the largest representative trade union at LU, the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT). The measures are believed to have had a 'significant positive impact' on absence due to stress. LU's stress management initiatives were undertaken within the framework of its five-year health plan, drawn up in 2004. The company employed an external stress consultant to analyse the stress problem, who worked with the company to develop interventions aimed at reducing stress at organisational, team and individual levels. A risk assessment, including potential stress risk factors, was carried out at organisational level, using the six categories from the HSE's stress management standards – role, change, demands, control, support and relationships. Guidance on how to assist employees suffering from stress was offered to managers at team level, and a range of interventions was offered to individual employees; these included a stress reduction programme, an employee guide on managing stress and one-to-one counselling.

Results from these interventions have included a reduction in overall sickness absence of almost 80% in the three months following the stress reduction programme, which fell to around 30% after a year. Among those who attended the stress reduction programme, 90% of participants reported that they could relate to each other better, 60% cited improved sleeping patterns, 90% reported an improved diet, while 80% cited an increase in their exercise levels. Overall, a 5% reduction in stress-related sickness absence was reported in the year following the introduction of the company's stress plan. LU's occupational health team is planning to set up a new steering group for the stress plan, which will include the active involvement of trade union health and safety representatives.

### *Training and lifelong learning*

Training and **lifelong learning** are key subjects for social dialogue in many countries, at national, sectoral and company levels. The following example from Germany highlights an innovative approach to continuous training at regional sectoral level, which is in turn implemented at company level.

In 2001, the German Metalworkers' Union (Industriegewerkschaft Metall, IG Metall) and the regional employer organisation Südwestmetall concluded a new collective agreement on continuous training for the Baden-Württemberg region. The agreement, which was still valid in 2007, stipulates that employees are entitled to discuss their training needs during regular annual consultations with their employer. Training measures focus on either maintaining workers' skills, adapting their qualifications to new occupational demands, or providing skills upgrading so that they can achieve a better qualified position within the company. Employers finance the training measures, which can be conducted during normal working hours.

In addition, IG Metall and Südwestmetall decided to set up a new agency for continuous training. This agency, among other things, advises companies and their workers on how to: develop their professional skills more comprehensively; develop training measures that are particularly suited to the needs of older and low-skilled workers; observe changes in companies' skill demands and suggest measures that are needed to prevent skill shortages; and provide additional information on training courses (**DE0107233N**).

In 2001, IG Metall hailed this new accord as a landmark agreement. As a result, the number of company agreements on training increased considerably, and the union is currently pursuing a strategy that aims to negotiate similar collective agreements throughout Germany. IG Metall also organised an external evaluation of the implementation process. Results of discussions with worker representatives in 20 companies show that the agreement's implementation takes up to two or three years: this is attributed to the fact that even if employer and employee representatives agree on individual training guidance and consultation, and on the need for training measures, integrating new training measures into everyday practice is a long-term process. Top-down human resource development strategies and the 'bottom-up' strategy of the collective agreement need to be combined, therefore placing new demands on social dialogue. Furthermore, trade union involvement is required to encourage discussions among works councils in different companies and to provide consultancy and training for worker representatives.

Südwestmetall was also asked to assess this regional sectoral-level agreement. It highlighted the need for continuous training to ensure the ongoing development of employee skills. In addition, it attributed the success of the negotiations that led to the conclusion of the agreement primarily to the fact that the various employers and works councils had already negotiated similar solutions at establishment level. Generally speaking, Südwestmetall holds the view that working conditions should be shaped by the social partners at establishment level.

A second example of social dialogue on training relates to a national-level agreement on individual access to training in Luxembourg, which formed part of the first agreement on working conditions to be negotiated on a national bipartite basis. The agreement was signed on 2 May 2003 by the Union of Luxembourg Enterprises (Union des entreprises luxembourgeoises, UEL) and the trade union confederations OGB-L and LCGB (**LU0305101F**). It introduces an entitlement to unpaid leave, which is rare in Luxembourg, as a means of providing for: individual access to continuing professional training; up to 20 days' training leave over a period of two years; and the possibility of flexible time management on an individual basis.

### *Meeting the challenges of an ageing workforce*

As the population in many EU countries is ageing, key social policy challenges include encouraging older workers to remain in the workforce for longer and stimulating knowledge transfer between generations to help ensure that skills and experience are not lost. The following case study shows how the social partners in a medium-sized energy company in Austria agreed on a package of measures designed to meet these challenges.

In the company in question, the Electric Power Station Wels (E-Werk Wels, EWV), the board and the works council agreed on a bundle of measures aimed, in particular, at meeting the challenges of an ageing workforce. The measures were a response to the fact that the average age of workers in the company was high, leading to fears among the company's social partners that skills would be lost

rapidly when the older workers retired. As a result, the company decided to launch a special ageing initiative and to participate in a joint programme initiated by the social partners in the region of Upper Austria (Land Oberösterreich), known as WAGE (Winning Age – Getting Future). The main aims of this programme were to: retain older workers in employment; sustainably integrate new employees into the company; and encourage knowledge transfer between the generations.

In order to achieve these goals, the social partners at EWW agreed on a programme enabling employees who have retired to continue working for the company, thus allowing for knowledge transfer; the programme also comprised a special recruitment and succession system. In addition, the social partners put a new flexitime scheme into place, allowing for more flexible working time arrangements. In the area of occupational health and safety, external trainers held seminars and workshops for employees on how to reduce stress. At the same time, managers and senior HR managers received training in areas such as work ability, ageing and managing diversity. A skills matrix was also developed to help employees design their own career plans. Following its efforts, this medium-sized company received an award from the WAGE committee for successfully implementing the programme.

### *Equal opportunities*

Equality and **equal opportunities** have traditionally been an area in which the social dialogue process can exert influence. In the following example from Slovenia, national-level social dialogue has resulted in an agreement which covers equal opportunity and non-discrimination, among other issues.

The Slovenian national-level Social Agreement for 2003–2005 contained a range of provisions agreed on by the national-level social partners (**SI0307101F**), as well as encouraging social dialogue at sectoral and workplace level. Among the issues addressed by this agreement were equal opportunities for all people, regardless of their sex, race or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation. Within the context of the agreement, the government made a commitment to: support the operation of relevant non-governmental organisations; develop measures for preventing, detecting and eliminating discrimination against women in the labour market; and adopt a number of special support measures for women, such as promoting entrepreneurship and education and training among women, reducing occupational segregation and pay inequality, and implementing legislation on equal opportunities for women and men. At the same time, the trade unions agreed to: monitor the working environment; warn employers of discriminatory situations; and raise awareness about workers facing actual or potential discrimination. Meanwhile, the employers agreed to adopt measures to: enable people with disabilities to access workplaces; achieve promotion or take part in training; and use examples of good practice to enforce equal opportunities for women and men.

### *Counteracting the effects of globalisation*

Social dialogue can be an important tool in mitigating the social consequences of globalisation and potential company relocation. The following example from Denmark highlights how flexible social dialogue at workplace level can achieve results in helping to maintain competitiveness and minimise the potential negative effects of corporate takeovers.

The example concerns the Danish producer of high technology measuring instruments, Radiometer, which was a family-owned company since 1935 and was sold to the United States (US) manufacturing and technology group Danaher in 2004. The takeover led to fears that the US company would downsize Radiometer, prior to its sale. Although Danaher expressed surprise at the Danish system of SUs at workplace level, it also showed some interest in this system, based on the results of dialogue between the SU and the company over the previous decade. The US company wanted to introduce a system of lean production, a development that had already begun within the company, through dialogue in the SU. In general, work organisation in its strict form is not typically a matter for the SU, as this issue usually falls under the remit of the company's management. In this case, however, the SU had discussed an overall change of working time flexibility, wage systems

connected to working hours, and job functions, leading to a more transparent and flexible system and combining this with a lean production system. Overall, it was agreed that individual competencies with regard to job functions should be made more flexible. Under this project, called 'job-2', employees spend about three months a year working in a function which is different from their normal job. If a function is changed or discontinued, the employees in that function will then be able to move to their second job function – the 'job-2'. In this way, the lines of job demarcation are broken down.

Cooperation at shop floor level took place across boundaries and in jointly governing teams. With the arrival of Danaher, lean production was eventually fully implemented, together with a number of other Danaher US-style management ideas. However, the cooperation between management and employees continued to be carried out in the 'Danish way' – a move which, according to the shop steward and the technical director of Radiometer, led to the satisfaction of everyone. No collective redundancies due to restructuring have taken place at the company since 1995.

The motivation behind this level of cooperation at Radiometer was explained by the company's shop steward. He outlined how, in the early 1990s, when cooperation levels were virtually non-existent, 'we on our side had to ask ourselves if it was the five last cents or a secure workplace that we wanted'. In the context of globalisation, combined with a threat of outward relocation to low-cost countries, which would result in job losses in Denmark, the company's competitiveness became an issue of common interest for both management and employee representatives; for the latter, it was a matter of retaining jobs in Denmark.

A further example of social dialogue's impact on counteracting the effects of globalisation can be found in Malta. In this particular instance, the General Workers' Union (GWU) in Malta was successful in securing measures to safeguard employees' jobs at the textiles group Bortex, which has been undergoing major restructuring over the past 10 years. The union has succeeded in concluding a succession of collective agreements at the company, which have mitigated the effects of restructuring for its workforce.

Another pertinent example of company-level social dialogue which has had an impact on working conditions and on alleviating the potentially negative effects of globalisation can be seen in Portugal. In this instance, social dialogue between management and the works council (*Comissão de Trabalhadores*) at the motor company VW AutoEuropa, part of the German-owned Volkswagen Group, has been successful in adapting working conditions regulations to meet the needs of competition between plants inside the Volkswagen Group, as well as helping to improve working conditions. This social dialogue took place within the context of the Volkswagen Group's global policy, as laid down in its 2002 Declaration of Social Rights and Industrial Relations at Volkswagen. The core focus of social dialogue at VW AutoEuropa is on preventing redundancies by adapting working time arrangements to production demands, in exchange for job guarantees (**PT0312101N**). In the most recent agreement, covering the period 2006–2008 (**PT0612039I**), AutoEuropa's management has guaranteed all jobs until December 2008. This agreement covers pay and a range of additional issues, such as concrete measures to promote employability, which includes financial help for working students, and measures to improve work–life balance, notably by making it easier for pregnant employees to change from shift work to day work.

In the context of Portuguese industrial relations, AutoEuropa is seen as an exceptional case of successful social dialogue on working conditions. It is thought this has been made possible due to the fact that the company's management is committed to a process of negotiated change and because the works council conducts negotiations independently from trade union structures, responding exclusively to the needs of the company's employees.

A final example in this context comes from Italy, where researchers have evaluated the influence of social dialogue in two large food companies, Barilla and Parmalat, in the region of Parma in northern Italy (Pini and Delsoldato, 2005). Both companies are family owned and well-known in Italy as examples of participative industrial relations, although restricted to shop-floor management. Barilla has developed both innovative policies and social dialogue processes driven by management, while



Parmalat has developed an industrial relations culture that fosters innovation, based on teamworking and on-the-job training, due to good social relationships among employees. In December 2004, Parmalat faced bankruptcy problems and the new management relied strongly on intense information and consultation flows in order to continue its operations; this was achieved by widening the social dialogue to macro-organisational issues. As a result, despite financial restrictions, the company survived and has been able to continue its operations.

### *Company-level social dialogue*

In some companies, social dialogue has improved working conditions in a range of areas. This is the case at KCM in Bulgaria, a private manufacturing company in the metalworking sector, which employs some 1,400 workers. Trade union density at the company is 79% and two trade unions are recognised. The main body for social dialogue in the company is the bipartite Council for Social Cooperation (CSC); negotiations are carried out within this council on all labour and social security issues, in addition to collective agreement negotiations. Dialogue on health and safety issues is conducted by the Working Conditions Committee (WCC). A health and safety programme for the company is developed and coordinated by trade unions and the WCC, and the employer reports every six months on its implementation. Under this programme, the company is obliged to undertake a risk assessment for all jobs and to provide the following measures: work clothes and shoes, personal safety guards, free meals, medical examinations for workers, seven days of health treatments for those workers undertaking work defined as the highest risk, professional illness and accident insurance for all workers, and monitoring of the working environment.

An integral part of the company's collective agreement is its programme for **vocational training** and lifelong learning. Under this programme, the employer provides: vocational training courses aimed at ensuring the employability of workers; knowledge and skills development in order to ensure that the workforce is prepared for any introduction of new technologies; courses and workshops related to labour and social security legislation, aimed at trade union representatives.

As a result of this company-level social dialogue, a range of more superior working conditions has been secured at the company, compared with those contained in the collective agreement for the sector to which KCM belongs. These conditions include the following measures: 23 days' paid annual leave compared with 21 days at sectoral level; 10 days of additional paid leave for those whose work is classified as being particularly dangerous, compared with six days at sectoral level; a nightwork premium of €0.50 an hour, compared with €0.25 an hour at sectoral level; and a meal allowance of €2.70 a day for certain workers, compared with €1.50 a day at sectoral level.

The general view is that the company, as a result of these measures, has benefited from a reduced rate of work-related accidents, that the workforce is more motivated and that a relationship of trust has developed between the company and the trade union representatives. Moreover, the company is in a stronger financial position.

### *Social dialogue in small companies*

Developing social dialogue structures in SMEs and very small companies is often more difficult than in large companies, due to a lack of formalised structures. In France, one innovative initiative has enabled the establishment of a collective bargaining procedure in very small companies in the Tarn region in southwestern France. This initiative dates back to 1999, when an agreement was signed between the Craftwork Employers' Association (Union professionnelle artisanale, UPA) of the Tarn region (UPA 81) and the five representative trade union confederations – the General Confederation of Labour (Confédération générale du travail, CGT), the French Democratic Confederation of Labour (Confédération française démocratique du travail, CFDT), the General Confederation of Labour – Force ouvrière (Confédération générale du travail – Force ouvrière, CGT-FO), the French Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff – General Confederation of Professional and Managerial Staff (Confédération française de l'encadrement – Confédération générale des cadres, CFE-CGC) and the French Christian Workers' Confederation (Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens, CFTC). The agreement provided for the creation of an intersectoral Joint

Commission of Artisan Companies in the Tarn (Commission paritaire inter-branches des entreprises Artisanales du Tarn, CPAT).

The CPAT was given the power to negotiate on working time, vocational training policy, the prevention of disputes and the provision of legal advice to companies and employees. It covers some 3,400 companies and 16,000 employees. The commission is composed of 10 representatives of the UPA 81 and 10 trade union representatives (two per union). The main activities of the CPAT cover the:

- reduction of working time;
- development of assistance for companies in implementing risk prevention policies; seven employees or trade union officers were trained and have given training on risk prevention in about 20 companies;
- creation of a Joint Inter-sector Health and Safety and Working Conditions Unit for Artisans in the Tarn (Cellule Paritaire Inter-branches d'Hygiène de Sécurité et des Conditions de Travail artisanale tarnaise, CPIHSCT) in May 2003; this unit is made up of CPAT members, with the exception of CGT-FO representatives, and also includes the additional compulsory presence of local authorities, sickness insurance bodies, preventive bodies, the occupational health service, as well as regional and departmental labour directorates; however, at present the CPIHSCT is not functioning, as the representatives of the signatory parties have not yet been designated.

Nevertheless, difficulties have reportedly arisen in implementing the CPAT initiatives in companies, notably because of a lack of financial resources and the fact that the UPA is out of step with employers on a range of issues.

### *Partnership agreements*

The conclusion of partnership agreements at workplace level between representatives of management and trade unions has been a focus of company-level social dialogue in some countries over the past two decades – most notably, in Ireland and the UK.

In Ireland, a number of examples of partnership working and its benefits for working conditions can be found. For instance, partnership in relation to changes in work organisation appears to be at quite an advanced stage in the engineering company Tegral Metal Forming (TMF) (**IE0007153F**). Partnership has endured at TMF, having been introduced as far back as 1997. Developments of particular note at TMF include the reorganisation of work around a skill-based pay system, the introduction of annualised working hours, and the laying down of foundations for a seemingly effective gain-sharing scheme, despite some initial teething problems.

Established in 1977, TMF currently employs 80 people and its main activities are steel formation and the supply of steel roofing. Clerical workers in the company are represented by the Services Industrial Professional Technical Union (SIPTU) and craft workers by the Technical Electrical and Engineering Union (TEEU). A joint union-management partnership forum was established in 1997 to address challenges, such as new competitors, service demands from customers, and complying with the terms of the EU Working Time Directive. The day-to-day activities of this joint forum are conducted by a steering committee consisting of eight members, along with various joint-task teams established to address special issues of concern. Initially, these task teams addressed core business issues that were deemed to be reasonably safe, which helped the partnership process to achieve credibility and generate trust. Thereafter, the process became more ambitious, and eventually a team-based system was implemented across the plant, incorporating a jointly agreed pay system based on skill levels, as well as a gain-sharing system based on the cost per tonne produced. However, early resistance to this cost per tonne measurement arose among the teams, and a joint team was established to devise an alternative; as a result of these efforts, four key performance indicators were jointly devised, along with a joint monitoring team for reviewing performance against these indicators.

The main benefits reportedly associated with partnership at TMF include: better working conditions; a more stable work organisation; the virtual elimination of overtime; higher trust; less time spent on industrial relations issues; reduced working hours; and stabilised costs.

In the UK, many case studies can be found detailing the implementation and effect of partnership working. One such case study looks at the cider producer HP Bulmer. Headquartered in Hereford in west England and employing some 1,000 workers in the UK, the company has recognised trade unions since the 1970s. In 1994, HP Bulmer signed a formal partnership agreement with trade union representatives, under which an employee council and a joint working party (JWP) on employee relations operate. The council meets regularly and discusses matters connected with company policy and decisions that affect employees' futures. The JWP deals with a range of issues, including pay, shift work, holiday working, employment security, job flexibility, long-term sickness absence, stress management, grading and performance-related pay. A learning centre has also been established under the partnership arrangement, providing training and skills development to employees.

The trade unions consider that the partnership arrangements outlined in this case study are working well. A number of specific policies have been adopted within the partnership framework, including policies pertaining to alcoholism and drugs, retirement benefits, a code of practice on job loss, and stress. Moreover, an employee attitudinal survey revealed a generally positive attitude towards the employee council. Employees welcomed the overall involvement process and highlighted a number of issues, including a perception of widespread trust in colleagues, an understanding of goals and objectives, a willingness to express points of view more freely, and an emphasis on finding a joint solution to problems rather than being told how to do things. Improvements perceived by employees as a result of partnership working include the following benefits: better morale; increased commitment; a more balanced view on the part of the company, which realises that it has a commitment to its workforce and shareholders; and the opportunity for all employees to discuss issues with senior management and to know that they will be listened to.

## **Examples of incomplete social dialogue**

Despite the many examples of successful social dialogue, other examples point to instances where social dialogue has proved problematic or where it did not achieve its intended outcomes. Some of these examples are outlined in the following sub-sections, which are organised thematically.

### *Working time*

One particular case study illustrates an example of incomplete social dialogue in the area of working time, which was identified by the Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions (Eesti Ametiühingute Keskliit, EAKL). In this instance, the Estonian Locomotive Workers' Trade Union (Eesti Vedurimeeste Ametiühing) faced problems with working time issues. In particular, the trade union highlighted the fact that shifts for locomotive workers are very long, lasting up to 30 hours, due to the length of time it takes to travel between work locations. The trade union wanted the time taken to travel from one location to another to be calculated as working time, therefore ensuring that workers would be paid for this time.

The issue of working conditions for locomotive drivers has been problematic for Estonian trade unions for some time. In particular, trade unions have been focusing their efforts on remuneration issues in cases where workers spend long lengths of time in the workplace due to sequential shifts and lengthy travelling times between places of work – for example, when travelling from one station to another. Shifts for locomotive workers can last up to a maximum of 12 hours; this must be followed by a rest period amounting to at least 50% of the time spent on the previous shift, which is then followed by another 12-hour shift. As locomotive workers are allowed to work a maximum of two shifts during one period of work, the length of one work period may be up to 30 hours (including rest time), during which time the locomotive workers stay on the employer's premises. These issues remain a subject of considerable interest for the trade unions, as there has been no agreement on whether workers should be paid for travelling time, in accordance with the trade unions' wishes.

Furthermore, unlike the road transport sector, working time issues in railway transport differ according to the various enterprises as there is no sectoral agreement on this matter. In addition, social dialogue in the rail sector has proved to be more time-consuming than in other sectors and agreements are difficult to reach, in turn leading to many lengthy disputes over collective agreements. This may be due to intense competition between trade unions in the sector: for instance, five of the trade unions are competing for members and the right to conclude collective agreements in this relatively small sector, which had about 3,900 employees in 2005 – representing 0.7% of total employment in the economy.

### *Occupational health and safety*

Social dialogue difficulties sometimes arise when the social partners are unable to reach agreement, either between employer and employee representatives, or among the employer or employee representatives. One such example involves a French company working as a subcontractor in the automobile sector.

The company in question belongs to a major international group and has around 350 employees, including a high proportion of temporary workers: in 2004, the company had 91 temporary employees out of a total 291 workers. It has also experienced many changes in the appointment of its directors and human resource managers.

The company operates a lean production work process, which is constantly being placed under growing time pressure: although overall production conditions are relatively stable, the products are becoming increasingly complex; as a result, technical issues arise along with periods during which there is a significant amount of alteration in the production process.

In 1994, the company took measures to reduce the incidence of musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs), aiming to raise awareness of health issues among those involved, particularly the occupational health officer. The initiative seemed to be effective, as the number of MSD cases fell from 48 cases in 1992 to zero in 1996. However, in more recent years, the number of MSD cases started to increase once again, rising from two cases out of a total 399 employees in 1999 to 20 cases out of a total 295 employees in 2004. During the same period, the number of days lost due to sickness absence increased from 7,400 to 12,600 days. Complaints about MSDs also increased, rising from 1,637 complaints in 2002 to 1,955 in 2004. At the same time, an estimated one quarter of the company's production staff were reported to be suffering from restricted aptitude, 30 cases of which were deemed to be serious. Redeployment of staff was also made more difficult due to the company's lean production system.

Although three trade union confederations operate at the company – namely, CGT, CFDT and CGT-FO – there is no unity between them. In more recent times, the quality of social dialogue has reportedly deteriorated and tensions are allegedly rising: for example, the trade unions have left working groups organised by management. Tensions have also resulted in industrial action against the company's lean production system.

The central issue appears to be the diverging and irreconcilable points of view of the actors concerned regarding the existence of an effective preventive policy. The MSD working group functions erratically, largely because the productive context and problems related to this monopolise the actors' attention, to the detriment of other issues. Other problems include the fact that: policy is not followed by local management; resource employees disappear or leave their functions; health indicators are not monitored; and actions are left unfinished. These factors have combined to undermine the efforts made to create a coherent approach to the prevention and management of MSDs.

Eventually, the deterioration of indicators – concerning both workplace accidents and occupational diseases – which took place in 2004, led to the French labour inspectorate serving a formal notice to the company.

Another example which illustrates the failure of social dialogue to resolve occupational health and safety issues can be found in Latvia. In this instance, efforts were made to put in place measures at

national sectoral level to reduce workplace accidents in the construction sector. The construction sector is a key industry in terms of the impact of efforts to improve health and safety and to reduce work-related accidents. However, in the following example from Latvia, these initiatives were judged to be only 'partly successful' as statistics show that the situation has not yet improved.

Latvia's construction sector has more than 4,000 companies and one of the highest accident rates. It also has a large proportion of informal working and immigrant labour. Violation of the labour legislation is a common problem, particularly among small construction companies. Problems include fatigue, physical overload, failure to use protective equipment and the absence of employment contracts. These issues all contribute to the relatively high incidence of workplace accidents in the sector, including fatal accidents. The country's State Labour Inspectorate (Valsts Darba Inspekcija, VDI) focuses on preventive measures, organising inspection campaigns and control measures in construction companies.

The main trade union in the sector, the Latvian Trade Union of Construction Workers (Latvijas Celtnieku arodbiedrība, LCA), has continually stressed the importance of safety at work. Specific activities were conducted in 2003, when the trade union took part in an international campaign focusing on the elimination of risks in the construction sector. In 2004, LCA organised an exhibition aimed at increasing safety in the sector. All of the activities were undertaken at national sectoral level and were aimed at companies, individual employers and construction workers.

Despite these efforts, establishing meaningful social dialogue in the construction sector has proved difficult; this is largely attributed to the fact that the sector comprises a large number of small companies with mobile staff and without trade union representation. The interventions were therefore judged to be only partly successful, as the health and safety situation in Latvia's construction sector has not improved. According to data issued by the VDI, some 217 work-related accidents occurred in construction companies in 2006, of which 10 were fatal while 65 involved serious injuries. Nevertheless, it is thought that employers in the construction sector are now paying more attention to working conditions and health and safety issues due to concerns about being inspected.

Additional reasons why it is difficult to create meaningful dialogue around occupational health and safety issues include the significant growth of the sector, with gross domestic product (GDP) growth ranging between 15% and 18% a year at present. Other factors include the presence of large numbers of temporary and low-skilled workers in the sector, and the fact that employees do not follow labour safety rules.

### *National-level dialogue*

In Malta, efforts to conclude a tripartite social pact in 2004 and 2005 ultimately failed. The government was originally keen to promote the idea of a social pact in order to enhance the country's competitiveness and economic situation. All of the main social partners in the country worked together to try to reach consensus. In November 2004, the chair of the Malta Council for Economic and Social Development (MCESD), the country's highest national tripartite forum, presented a draft social pact to be debated by the social partner representatives. The proposed pact aimed to generate better work opportunities and focused on stimulating economic activity and the development of human capital. Among the proposed measures were the following: providing good quality childcare; reforming the unemployment benefit system to encourage registered unemployed people to find work; eliminating abuse of invalidity benefits; encouraging private sector employers to contribute towards retraining their employees; and making part-time tax benefits available to both members of a married couple in the case of joint tax returns.

Lengthy sessions were held within the MCESD, as trade unions had strong reservations about certain issues. Conversely, the employer associations responded favourably to the draft social policy and encouraged the government to take the necessary actions to enhance the country's economic situation. However, GWU, Malta's largest general union, pulled out of the discussions as it felt that the debates were not leading to any acceptable conclusion (MT0501101N). While other trade unions

also voiced disagreement over some of the measures, they indicated that they were satisfied with a number of proposals which they believed would be beneficial to employees; such proposals included an increased investment in training by employers, the combating of tax evasion and a reduction of unnecessary bureaucracy. Ultimately, however, the social partners were unable to reconcile their differences and to reach consensus. On this occasion, therefore, social dialogue failed to result in the signing of a new social pact due to irreconcilable differences between the social partners.

In many countries, the social partners are directly involved in and consulted about the formulation of new legislation in the social policy field. However, the process does not always run smoothly and even if consultations take place, the social partners are sometimes frustrated by the fact that the government does not subsequently take their views on board when drafting the legislation. This was the case in Romania, for example, during the drafting of new health and safety legislation: although the social partners had signed a joint protocol and submitted proposals through the appropriate consultation channels, the government did not include their proposals in the new law.

### *Breakdown of social dialogue structures*

In some cases, a malfunctioning or breakdown of social dialogue structures leads to the failure of social dialogue. In the following example from Ireland, a partnership agreement ultimately failed because neither the management nor trade union side had faith in the initiative.

At its zenith, the ‘compact for constructive participation’ of the Irish airport management company Aer Rianta – now called the Dublin Airport Authority (DAA) – was deemed to be the most advanced partnership initiative in Ireland to date (IE0312202F). The compact, which dates back to the mid 1990s, was without precedent in terms of its ambition in attempting to establish multi-level, direct and indirect, joint problem-solving arrangements between the country’s three airports – Dublin, Cork and Shannon – and nothing has been attempted on the same scale since. One of the central principles of the compact was ‘jointness’: in other words, no one party would seek to impose unilateral change, and all proposals for change would go through an agreed partnership process involving all of those affected, prior to any decision being made to implement change.

However, the compact has since imploded. Ultimately, it is thought that the Aer Rianta partnership was a casualty because neither the management nor trade unions had sufficient faith in the partnership. It is also believed that various parties were more concerned about maintaining their own power bases, especially middle management. Aspects of the compact also appeared to be overly complex. Moreover, it may have relied too much on key senior management and trade union ‘champions’, and once this inner circle disbanded, there was little to prevent the process from breaking down. Above all, the social dialogue was primarily restricted to union–senior management level engagement over strategic issues and did not effectively involve the workers on the ground. For instance, a proposal to roll out participative work teams was not realised to any great extent in practice. Thus, the initiative remained a truncated form of social dialogue, which was largely remote from the day-to-day experiences of many workers.

## Success factors and lessons learnt

### Success factors

The research outlined in this report provides a wide range of examples where social dialogue has been successful in influencing working conditions positively. Drawing on these examples, it is possible to make some general comments about possible success factors for social dialogue.

Firstly, it is essential that the structures are in place to enable social dialogue to take place – at national, sector and company or enterprise level. These structures are more recent in some of the new EU Member States in central and eastern Europe, although social dialogue in these countries is now progressing more successfully.

Overall, it would seem that, in order for social dialogue to be successful, particularly in relation to potentially contentious areas such as pay and working time, both parties need to be able to put forward their case coherently; at the same time, they need to have the mutual trust and respect necessary to be able to work together to resolve differences in points of view and expectations. A good and longstanding working relationship between employer and employee representatives is a factor that can contribute greatly to this.

On all levels – national, including tripartite dialogue, sectoral and company or enterprise levels – the parties need to have a clear idea of their aims, as well as the commitment to work together with other parties. In some areas, such as occupational health and safety, the ultimate goals of the parties involved in social dialogue often converge, making progress potentially easier. However, being committed to implementing the proposed measures is also crucial in terms of the outcomes of social dialogue on occupational health and safety issues, as illustrated by some of the aforementioned case studies.

Ensuring that actions are undertaken as a result of the social dialogue is also key to the success of initiatives. In the case study example from the Romanian wood sector, the occupational health and safety activities were targeted and judged to be of value by those participating in these activities. As a consequence, the number and seriousness of work-related accidents fell the following year.

The willingness to engage in a new project from the outset and the foresight to put in place mechanisms in advance of a project's inception can also be significant factors for ensuring the success of social dialogue. This was demonstrated, for instance, in the case study example from Spain, where efforts were made by employer and employee representatives at regional sector level to put in place an agreement covering health and safety and other issues for construction workers involved in building the World Fair in Zaragoza in 2008. Ultimately, if the parties have a clear idea in advance of what they want to achieve, the likelihood of success will be greater.

Training, development and lifelong learning are also areas where the goals of social dialogue parties can converge significantly, increasing the likelihood of a successful outcome. This was the case in one of the examples from Germany, where a regional training agreement had been concluded. Both parties wanted to ensure that their dialogue led to positive outcomes. In terms of the agreement's implementation, the parties have worked hard to ensure that it is correctly put into practice at workplace level.

In some cases, trust between the social partners can be built by working together on issues that are generally less controversial – such as training and development – before moving on to more potentially contentious topics, such as pay and working time.

Elsewhere, social dialogue may not be a matter of choice, but a necessity: for example, employee representatives are obliged to respond quickly when fears over job security arise due to restructuring or increased competition as a result of globalisation. The previous case studies offer a number of examples where social dialogue has been used to reach agreement to secure jobs in times of change, or to compete with other companies or plants within the same company. In such instances, it is essential that trade unions are united and can show strength during negotiations, as the balance between employer and employee representatives is not always equal in these situations: for example,

the employer may be threatening to relocate production to another country, which could result in the plant's closure.

On some occasions, an imaginative approach is needed, particularly in the case of social dialogue in SMEs or very small companies. Often, the workforces in these types of companies are not unionised and it is therefore difficult to carry out social dialogue as the necessary structures are not in place. In France, a structure to enable social dialogue to take place at regional level in very small companies has been put in place and has had some success.

Finally, a partnership approach between employers and employee representatives can work well at company level, as shown by examples from the UK and Ireland. Once again, trust between the parties involved is a major factor for ensuring the success of such initiatives. Another important factor is the ability of the employee representatives to generate acceptance among members of the workforce, some of whom may be suspicious of these arrangements, particularly if they have been accustomed to more traditional collective bargaining arrangements.

## **Lessons learnt**

A number of important lessons can be learnt from the case study examples of incomplete social dialogue cited previously. Firstly, it appears to be crucial that both employer and employee representatives 'buy in' to the process. If one or both parties are not firmly committed to making the process work, it is unlikely to ever succeed or get off the ground. In the Irish case study example from Aer Rianta, one of the main flaws seemed to be the fact that the management was using the process for its own ends and that it was therefore remote from the workers at ground level. Thus, it is crucial that the social dialogue process is not 'hijacked' by any particular party and that the wider needs and aims of the parties being represented are taken into account. Furthermore, it is important that social dialogue processes are not too complex and that there is good succession planning; otherwise, the process will stall when key individuals are no longer present.

In some cases, the social dialogue process may fail due to irreconcilable differences between the parties. Obviously, it is difficult to bring together parties that have opposing views and expectations of the social dialogue process. However, this can sometimes be achieved by introducing the appropriate mediation arrangements.

In other instances, the problems were more connected to the emergence of internal disagreements and a lack of unity within one of the social dialogue parties, either on the employer or employee side. The social partners on each side therefore need to ensure that they are united in their approach to and preparations prior to social dialogue.

Sectors that are dominated by small companies, which are often not unionised, present problems in terms of the implementation and effectiveness of social dialogue, even if the dialogue process itself runs smoothly. The construction industry is one such sector, and some of the previous examples show how difficult it can be to achieve implementation effectively across the sector, in this case in relation to occupational health and safety matters. Therefore, strategies need to be developed to ensure that smaller companies have the necessary support to implement processes and procedures effectively.

Finally, some of the social partners expressed frustration at the fact that, although they had been consulted by the government on the formulation of new social policy and employment legislation, their views were not always been taken into account in the drafting of new laws. This is a difficult issue to surmount and it should be borne in mind that governments normally have the final say in terms of the final drafting of new legislation. Perhaps, one of the best strategies that the social partners could adopt would be to continue raising their profile with national governments wherever possible, in order to increase the likelihood that their views will be taken on board in the final drafting of legislation.



## Social partners' views on social dialogue

For the purposes of this research, representatives of both employee and employer organisations were contacted by national research centres and asked for their general views on the type, nature and quality of social dialogue in their country in terms of its influence on working conditions. The types of responses obtained from the social partners varied according to the national context. For example, in some countries, the social partners are closely involved in the social dialogue process. This is the case in Austria, for instance, where the social partners are consulted by the government on all legislative initiatives in their field of interest; as a result, legislation is formulated on the basis of a consensus between the social partners, with only minor amendments being made by the government. Consequently, employer and employee representatives in Austria agree that 'their influence in the drafting and eventually the enactment of new legislation in matters related to social and economic policy affecting the economy as a whole is very high'. Nevertheless, there have also been instances where employer and employee representatives in Austria have held different views on how to proceed in certain areas. For example, employee representatives would like to see more action aimed at helping older workers, whereas employers do not see the need for any additional regulation in this respect. In Luxembourg, the social partners are also closely involved in tripartite social dialogue and view this as being more preferable to preparing legislation, in terms of achieving social progress. However, although social dialogue works extremely well in Luxembourg, due to the fact that the actors are well acquainted with each other and meet regularly, one potential drawback is that the number of negotiators is limited, as the country is small.

Social partners in some of the Member States – for example Norway – pointed to the fact that dialogue between employer and employee representatives in areas that are not particularly controversial, such as competence development, allows for trust to be built up; this leads to easier dialogue over more controversial issues, such as working time. Other countries indicated that social dialogue in certain areas is more intense. In Italy, for instance, dialogue on occupational health and safety issues is quite intense and has recently resulted in a new health and safety bill.

In Denmark, social dialogue at workplace level is carried out within cooperation committees made up of management and employee representatives. In this context, both employer and employee representatives said that the system worked well and 'as intended' in terms of dealing with and having a positive impact on working conditions. Nevertheless, some problems were identified in the case of companies with fewer than 35 employees.

The newer Member States that have joined the EU in the past five years – predominantly the central and eastern European countries – are in a slightly different position than the 'older' EU15 countries, as their social dialogue mechanisms have had less time to develop than in the latter countries. Thus, the social partners in many of the new EU Member States frequently indicated that social dialogue needs to be developed further, both in terms of the institutions themselves and the influence that they have on working conditions. This was the case in Bulgaria, for example, where both trade union and employer representatives agreed that the social dialogue process could be strengthened. In the Czech Republic, the new Labour Code expands the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining. However, both employer and employee representatives believe that the expansion of social dialogue in the country is hindered by factors, such as a lack of information about the importance and results of social dialogue at all levels and the fact that it is difficult to enforce the measures contained in collective agreements. The parties also point to the relative weakness of the social dialogue institutions, including factors such as the long-term decline in trade union membership and problems with employer representation in some sectors. In Poland, the social partners were not particularly forthcoming in their views on the social dialogue process, according to the national centre; this may reflect the fact that social dialogue is not seen as having a significant role in the setting of working conditions. In Lithuania, the social partners indicated that social dialogue has developed over the past 15 years, and has moved away from solely focusing on job security and pay, to the pursuit of improved working conditions, even though pay is still the predominant focus at sectoral and company level.

In Latvia, the social partners point to the fact that social dialogue is hampered by a lack of partners on both sides and a mismatch between the availability of employer and employee representatives at sectoral and company level. In Bulgaria, the social partners stated that national-level social dialogue on working conditions is developing successfully, notwithstanding the fact that there is room for improvement.

In some countries, the social partners have seats on formal bodies – a situation which both sides tend to praise as being instrumental in ensuring that the social dialogue process is capable of influencing working conditions. In Cyprus, for example, social partner representatives sit on a range of tripartite bodies, such as the Economic Advisory Committee and the Industrial Advisory Board. Employer and employee representatives regard this as a positive experience, as it has created a real possibility for dialogue with a view to achieving consensus with the government on a range of issues. They also believe that the social dialogue process, in this way, creates a climate of trust and makes it possible for the social partners to intervene and take joint decisions on issues of importance in labour and social policy.

### **Views of employer representatives**

Many employer representatives were able point to successful examples of the social dialogue process in their country. From the examples outlined in this section, it would seem that the nature of the employer representatives' views depend to some extent on the social dialogue context, customs and practice in the particular country. For example, in the UK, the Confederation of British Industry (CBI), the UK's leading employer organisation, praised the social dialogue process and highlighted some particular examples of where it had worked well in a UK context. However, the CBI also emphasised that a case-by-case approach should be taken to the social dialogue process, as 'not all issues are appropriate for social partnership'.

In other countries, a tiered approach to social dialogue is in place: for example, Belgium operates a national, sectoral and then company-level approach to social dialogue. In such countries, some of the employers were critical of the fact that opportunities for negotiated solutions at company level did not exist, despite being provided for, in theory, by the system. This was the view, for instance, of the spokesperson for the Belgian Federation of Employers (*Fédération des Entreprises de Belgique/Verbond van Belgische Ondernemingen*, VBO/FEB).

The weakness of social dialogue at company level was also highlighted by employer representatives in Bulgaria, who partly attributed this to a lack of trade union structures in small and micro-sized companies. In the Czech Republic, collective bargaining and social dialogue have been assigned a greater role by the new Labour Code, which took effect on 1 January 2007. However, employers in the Czech Republic largely believe that the new Labour Code has not gone far enough in liberalising social dialogue; moreover, they are not happy with the fact that trade unions may represent the interests of all employees, including non-members.

In Ireland, where the social partners have been involved in national-level social partnership since 1987, the employer representatives view this partnership as one of the reasons for the rapid growth and success of the Irish economy over the past 20 years. However, the Irish Business and Employers' Confederation (IBEC) also notes that the partnership process has become more arduous in recent years, due to a range of difficulties being faced by the country at present.

Employer representatives in Slovenia expressed positive views of the social dialogue process, indicating that it has become stronger over the past 15 years; they attribute this, in particular, to the work of the country's tripartite Economic and Social Council (*Ekonomsko-socialni svet*, ESS).

### **Key issues**

In terms of key issues addressed in social dialogue, occupational health and safety was a significant concern for many employers. For example, the Organisation of the Self-Employed (*Unie van Zelfstandige Ondernemers*, UNIZO) in Belgium stressed the importance of strong support for SMEs, particularly in the area of occupational health and safety. Social dialogue in this area was considered

to be working well in Belgium and is resulting in improved working conditions; this is mainly attributed to the coordinating efforts of the prevention services and the strict legal framework, as well as collective sectoral agreements. Employer representatives in Bulgaria also expressed concern about the problems of health and safety at company level, stating that many employers do not have the financial capacity to put in place the measures that are required by law. In Greece, meanwhile, employer representatives state that a high degree of understanding between the social partners has developed in the area of health and safety. Occupational health and safety is also a key concern for the social partners in Hungary, both in terms of involvement in policy making and in the implementation of health and safety practices at workplace level.

In Estonia, the Estonian Employers' Confederation (Eesti Töoandjate Keskliit, ETTK) believes that the most controversial issue for employers at present is the lack of an insurance system for work-related accidents and occupational diseases – a matter which it would like to be discussed in national-level tripartite social dialogue.

Employer representatives in many countries state that greater flexibility in terms of the regulation of working conditions would allow for a smoother social dialogue process. This was the view of the Confederation of German Employers' Associations (Bundesvereinigung der Deutschen Arbeitgeberverbände, BDA), which stated that lower levels of regulation would ease the burden on employers.

### *Main problems*

The employers expressed a range of different views as to why the social dialogue process may not function as well as it ought to in certain cases. In Cyprus, for example, the employers indicated that social dialogue generally focuses on pay-related issues, due to the priorities of the trade unions. They believe, therefore, that the scope of social dialogue in Cyprus is not as wide as it should be.

Some evidence of the traditional adversarial relationship between trade unions and employers emerges in a number of countries, with certain employer representatives, such as the BDA in Germany, stating that the social dialogue process could be enhanced if trade unions let go of 'ideological reservations'. An example of a social dialogue initiative that did not progress due to 'trade union ideological reservations' was cited by the BDA – namely, the Alliances for Jobs (*Bündnis für Arbeit*) initiative, which was launched by the German government in 1998 (DE9812286N, DE9910219N). In Finland, the Confederation of Finnish Industries (Elinkeinoelämän keskusliitto, EK) believes that the 'conservative' approach of trade unions to reform of the social security system has been a weakening factor in terms of social dialogue.

In Denmark, within the context of an essentially voluntaristic system of workplace social dialogue, through cooperation committees, both employers and employees attribute the poor functioning of some committees to the reluctance of both sides to engage in the system.

Some employer representatives also complained that the government was not involving them sufficiently in the formulation of policy. In Romania, for instance, the Confederation of Employers in Industry, Services and Trade (Confederatia Patronatelor din Industrie, Servicii si Comert, CPISC) stated that the social partners are not always properly involved in the policy formulation process and that, when they are, their suggestions are not taken into consideration.

### **Views of employee representatives**

Many employee representatives praised the social dialogue process in their country, particularly in cases where it was well established. For instance, the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (Tjänstemännens Centralorganisation, TCO) noted that the process functions well at both central and local levels, implying that trade unions have adequate scope to influence decision making. Trade unions in Finland complimented the strength of the social dialogue process in their country and the positive influence that they believe it has had, and continues to have, on working conditions. Nevertheless, the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö, SAK) noted that at local level, according to a SAK survey, the

number of workplaces with favourable and cooperative social dialogue between top management and shop stewards decreased between 2000 and 2005.

Although, as noted above, the social dialogue process in many of the newer EU Member States is not as developed as it is in the EU15, some positive views were expressed about its progress. For example, trade unions in Latvia believe that social dialogue at national level is an effective tool which is helping to improve working conditions. The Estonian trade union confederation EAKL sees legislation as the main tool for regulating working conditions in the country, and believes that it is the social partners' role to contribute to the formulation of legislation, rather than to conclude collective agreements. In the Czech Republic, the trade union representatives maintain that the expansion of social dialogue is being hindered by a range of factors, including a long-term decline in trade union membership and difficulties in enforcing commitments contained in the collective agreements.

### *Key issues*

Learning, skills development and training were highlighted by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in the UK as areas where social dialogue can have a significant influence, through a range of initiatives such as: establishing workplace learning centres, providing paid time off for employees to learn, and offering support for workplace-based union learning representatives. In Ireland, both trade union and employer representatives highlighted training, skills development and lifelong learning as a key bottleneck area that needed urgent attention through social dialogue, to enable the Irish economy to progress and to boost the country's competitiveness.

In Spain, the role of social dialogue in strengthening the country's social security system was highlighted by a representative of the General Workers' Confederation (Unión General de Trabajadores, UGT), in addition to its influence in a range of other areas, including the: stabilisation of temporary work, regularisation of immigrant employment, implementation of wage revision clauses, implementation of equal opportunities measures for men and women, and application of EU social agreements.

Employee representatives also highlighted occupational health and safety as an area where social dialogue can have an influence. Romanian trade unions pointed to aspects such as health and safety in work committees at the workplace. In Hungary, trade unions view health and safety as a key area of focus and are campaigning around a number of issues, including the introduction of a legal right for the election of workplace health and safety representatives in SMEs and the establishment of a system of mobile safety representatives serving the SME sector. Trade unions in Estonia believe that their role in regulating occupational health and safety at the workplace has decreased, following the country's adoption of occupational health and safety legislation and the election of working environment representatives at workplace level. In Belgium, trade union representatives indicated that the mechanisms of social dialogue have a significant impact on occupational health and safety.

### *Main problems*

Many employee representatives pointed to differences in the quality of social dialogue according to the various levels at which it is conducted. For example, in Slovenia, it was reported that the quality of social dialogue was better at national rather than local level. In Slovakia, trade union representatives reported that social dialogue was more effective in larger companies with more than 250 employees and in companies of foreign origin, particularly German firms, than in domestic companies. In Malta, where collective bargaining is carried out at company rather than sectoral level, the GWU trade union noted that the main barriers to successful dialogue at company level are found in companies with no trade union representation. In Cyprus, trade union representatives stated that social dialogue at sectoral level was working well, particularly in sectors such as banking. However, they pointed to a number of perceived difficulties in tripartite social dialogue at national level, including non-representative involvement of the social partners, lack of effectiveness in many social areas, a limited agenda for dialogue, and a lack of statutory support. In Bulgaria, the view was

that although national-level dialogue is working well, sectoral, regional and company-level dialogue needs to be further developed.

Trade union representatives in some countries perceived an unevenness in the functioning of social dialogue across sectors. In Sweden, for instance, the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisationen, LO) indicated that social dialogue is functioning better in some sectors, such as paper and pulp, than in others, such as the hotels and restaurants and real estate sectors. Trade union representatives in Portugal also pointed to differences in social dialogue in sectoral terms. While trade unions in Belgium praised the effectiveness of sectoral social dialogue, they believe that social dialogue at company level is hampered by the absence of a statutory obligation for employee representation in SMEs.

Some of the employee representatives either criticised or disagreed with the employer representative bodies in relation to a range of issues. For example, Spanish trade union representatives would like more engagement on the part of the employers in the regulation of issues such as working hours' reduction and health and safety. In Bulgaria, trade unions have criticised employers for citing a stated lack of resources as the reason for not entering into social dialogue. In the Netherlands, where employee representatives report no shortage of social dialogue, there is some criticism that the results of dialogue are either unclear or difficult to achieve.

Some of the trade unions have highlighted the difficulties involved in implementing agreements. For example, trade union representatives in Slovenia pointed to a gap between the content of agreements and the reality at the workplace. French trade unions also highlighted the problem of effectively implementing the agreements. Meanwhile, trade union representatives in Greece pointed to a lack of coordination between consultation and control services in the area of health and safety and the need for more active involvement of high-level trade union representatives in stimulating social dialogue at workplace level, where small companies predominate.

The difficulty of increasing the influence of social dialogue on working conditions in SMEs was highlighted by some trade unions. For instance, the Confederation of German Trade Unions (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, DGB) noted the fact that works councils often do not exist in smaller companies. Moreover, trade unions in Germany believe that it is insufficient to leave the discussion and negotiation of topics, such as occupational health and safety, to the workplace level. French trade unions also pointed to the difficulties involved in ensuring effective dialogue in the case of SMEs and very small companies; this is partly attributed to the low levels of trade union membership in France and to a lack of representative structures in small companies.

In Portugal, the framework for collective bargaining and social dialogue has changed in more recent times, following the introduction of the new Labour Code in 2003 (**PT0305101N**). The General Confederation of Portuguese Workers (Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses – Intersindical Nacional, CGTP-IN) believes that the influence of social dialogue is weakening, due to a growth in individual employment contracts and the crisis in collective bargaining of recent years; this followed a collapse, in 2004, in the number of collective agreements being renewed (**PT0604019I**), as a result of the new Labour Code's stipulation that collective agreements do not automatically remain valid if they are not renewed by the signatory parties.

An essentially voluntarist system of industrial relations exists in Ireland, although the 2001–2004 Industrial Relations Acts potentially offered a mechanism for processing disputes over trade union representation in non-unionised companies. Nevertheless, this provision has been weakened by case law – an issue which the Irish trade unions perceive as being problematic.

## Commentary

This comparative report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of research and case studies which delineate the impact of social dialogue on working conditions in 28 European countries. The picture that has been painted is understandably diverse, given the variety of national contexts and social dialogue systems, in addition to the breadth of the topic.

A number of quantitative studies have attempted to show a link between the presence of social dialogue and improvements in a range of working conditions. Such improvements include reduced working time, increased working time flexibility to suit employees' needs, access to and participation in training, the existence of equal opportunities policies, and job security measures. Nevertheless, while the findings of many studies are extremely relevant to this research, it is often difficult to determine the exact contribution that social dialogue has made to improvements in working conditions. For example, in some studies, statistical tests have not been carried out to cater for the fact that trade unions are more likely to be present in larger companies, which are more likely as a result to have structures in place, such as equal opportunities policies and formal training and skills development programmes. In other cases, improvements have been made following social dialogue intervention, but it is difficult to establish causal links between these improvements and the intervention measures.

The role played by the labour inspectorates varies between countries. In some Member States, the labour inspectorate plays an enforcing role mainly, in addition to carrying out studies and providing information to organisations on a range of occupational health and safety matters. However, in other countries, the labour inspectorate goes beyond this role and seeks to encourage the initiation of social dialogue; it does this using methods such as organising seminars and forums in which the social partners can meet and engage, providing advice and guidance to the social partners, and offering courses aimed at training the social partners in dialogue and negotiation techniques. As the labour inspectorates are well placed to have a good overview of the context and difficulties that the social partners may be facing when trying to engage in social dialogue, they could play an important role in encouraging and helping to initiate social dialogue in a greater number of countries than is currently the case.

It is clear from the qualitative studies and case study examples outlined in this report that social dialogue is extremely active at national, sectoral and company level, and in all areas of working conditions – particularly in the field of occupational health and safety. The social dialogue process requires a number of years to mature in all countries, as the necessary structures, traditions and relationships between the parties need to be put in place and nurtured. In many of the new EU Member States, particularly in central and eastern Europe, the social dialogue process is not as established as it is in the EU15 countries, although there is evidence that this process is starting to develop more rapidly.

Moreover, the way in which social dialogue actually works differs between the countries. Nonetheless, the majority of the social partners interviewed for this study expressed positive views about the achievements and future development of social dialogue, albeit with some criticisms regarding its functioning, depending on the viewpoint of the particular organisation.

The factors that have contributed to the success or failure of social dialogue initiatives have also been outlined in this report, based on the experiences described in the various case studies featured. A worthwhile exercise would be to consider these issues when building future social dialogue initiatives or developing existing ones. For example, social dialogue depends on relationships and the fostering of trust between employer and employee representatives; in order to build that trust, an initial approach that already appears to have been successful could be to begin with topics that are relatively uncontroversial, such as training and skills development initiatives, before progressing to more potentially difficult topics such as working time. Other valuable lessons to bear in mind in the building of successful social dialogue include ensuring that the process is relevant to all parties, that all parties are committed to its objectives, that they maintain a united approach to the dialogue, and

that the dialogue does not rely solely on the contributions of key individuals as this could lead to a breakdown in dialogue if these persons are no longer present.

Social dialogue has achieved much in relation to its positive impact on working conditions in Europe – at all levels. In terms of the future, it is likely that further progress will be made, not only in the new EU Member States but in all EU countries, as the social partners continue to be involved in debates and the successful conclusion of agreements at levels ranging from national social policy initiatives – including EU-driven initiatives – to sectoral and company-level actions. In terms of social dialogue subject matter, key future challenges are likely to include further developments in occupational health and safety, issues pertaining to the introduction and use of new technology, the problem of the ageing population, along with efforts to modernise social security and pension systems, and measures seeking to harness the positive aspects of globalisation.

Andrea Broughton, Institute for Employment Studies

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## Annex 1: Overview of surveys cited in report

**Table A1: Overview of surveys establishing a link between social dialogue and working conditions, by country**

*This table provides an overview of surveys establishing a link between social dialogue and working conditions in 19 countries.*

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
AT	Austrian Working Climate Survey ( <u>Arbeitsklima-Index</u> )	<p>A quantitative survey carried out in quarterly waves, based on interviews with a representative sample of 900 respondents. In one of these surveys, the authors refer to differences between companies with and without a works council.</p> <p>When analysing the surveys, a sample of 3,800 respondents from the quarterly interview waves, between the years 2000 and 2005, was used. The sample is restricted to companies with between 20 and 99 employees in order to avoid a bias related to company size (works councils are overrepresented in larger companies).</p>	<p>Companies with a works council record a number of advantages relating to working conditions. On average, net wages are €57 higher each month and the gender wage gap is lower than in the reference group. The use of regular overtime is between 18% and 24% less frequent; job security is higher and labour turnover lower. In general, employees represented by a works council have higher job satisfaction. On the working climate index scale, staff with a works council reach a value of 106 index points for overall job satisfaction, which is one point higher than staff in companies without a works council.</p>
	<i>The adoption of precarious employment forms in protected employment economies: The case of call centres in Austria, Germany and Spain (Shire et al, 2007)</i>	<p>Secondary analysis of three national company surveys of call centres. The dataset includes responses to a survey of senior managers in 96 call centres in Austria.</p> <p>The secondary analysis focuses on factors influencing employment strategies in call centres, specifically the use of non-standard, precarious forms of employment. The authors use two independent variables indicating the existence and extent of labour representation: coverage of</p>	<p>The secondary analysis of the dataset shows a clearly positive relationship between the existence of employee representation, and thus social dialogue at company level, and the reduction or even prevention of precarious employment forms in Austrian call centres.</p>

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
		the call centres by collective agreement; and the presence of a works council at the company.	
<b>BE</b>	Trade union survey on employee participation in SMEs (De Weerd et al, 2005)	A postal survey of 3,000 employees working in SMEs, which are members of Belgium's Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens/Algemeen Christelijk Vakverbond, <u>CSC/ACV</u> ). The response rate was about 50%.	An improved information flow on occupational health and safety matters was found in companies with a trade union presence, along with a higher degree of employee influence on such matters.
<b>BG</b>	<i>Safety and health at the workplace – Trade union experiences in central and eastern Europe</i> (Rice and Repo, 2000) – commissioned by the ILO	A questionnaire survey of 371 trade union respondents in Bulgaria. The questions covered: organisational information; health and safety issues; workplace monitoring; occupational health services; control; training; information; and workplace structures dealing with safety and health (regulations, programmes, policies, collective agreements, health and safety committees, worker participation rights, trade union involvement).	The survey revealed a positive impact of social dialogue in the area of occupational health and safety, on issues such as: good access to training; trade union participation in the development of occupational health and safety policy and regulations; and improvements to occupational health and safety as a result of monitoring.
<b>CZ</b>	'Means and effectiveness of mediating interests among individuals, social groups and the state' (RILSA and Institute of Sociology of the Academy of Sciences, 2003)	The research is made up of two surveys: 1) An empirical survey of employees' opinions of trade unions; the sample consisted of 1,009 persons over the age of 15 in the Czech Republic. The respondents were chosen using a quota selection based on the characteristics of region, size of municipality, gender, age and education. Standardised, questionnaire-based	The first survey found that both trade union members and non-members have a positive view of the commitments negotiated in enterprise-level collective agreements, in particular regarding the areas of working time, leave, occupational health and safety, and employee benefits.  The second survey found that trade unions' powers in the area of health and safety were identified as being

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
		<p>interviews with respondents were carried out;</p> <p>2) Questionnaire-based interviews with 106 respondents, 52 of whom were human resources professionals and personnel managers; the remaining 54 respondents were trade union officials from enterprises operating in the primary, secondary and tertiary sector. The research aimed to map opinions among enterprise-level trade union representatives and personnel managers on the conduct of social dialogue at enterprise level.</p>	<p>particularly crucial for promoting employees' interests in the workplace.</p>
DE	IAB Establishment Panel data, 2005	<p>Data from 16,000 establishments in all economic sectors in eastern and western Germany. Matched pair analysis compared establishments with and without works councils.</p>	<p>Weekly working hours in west German establishments with works councils are on average 0.6 hours lower than in other establishments. This is attributed to the works councils' influence on the implementation of collective agreements. No significant impact on overtime working was found, but there was a positive effect on: the usage of working time accounts, formalised flexible working time arrangements, and part-time work that is liable to social security contributions, compared with contingent part-time work.</p>
	<p>Institute of Economic and Social Research (Wirtschaft- und Sozialwissenschaftliches Institut, WSI) works council survey</p>	<p>Telephone interviews surveying more than 2,000 works councils in all sectors and company sizes.</p>	<p>More than 100 various forms of working time arrangements exist in establishments with a works council, 51% of all establishments made use of opening clauses to introduce various forms of working time flexibilisation, 15% reduced working time for a defined time period and 26% lengthened working time.</p>

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
	Analysis of IAB data (Bellmann and Ellguth, 2006)	Matched pair analysis of IAB Establishment Panel data (1996–2005)	Participation in training was higher in establishments with works councils. Moreover, the participation rate increased in establishments with works councils after the reform of the Works Constitution Act ( <i>Betriebsverfassungsgesetz, BetrVG</i> ), whereas it stagnated in companies without worker representation.
<b>DK</b>	Survey undertaken by the Danish Society of Engineers (Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark, <u>IDA</u> ) in 2006, looking at engineers' work environment and psychosocial well-being.	This survey focused on the psychosocial work environment in SMEs with less than 151 employees. The sample consisted of some 1,039 engineers.	The survey found that half of the respondents believed that formal work in safety committees should be increased in order to deal with psychosocial conditions at work; moreover, private sector companies appear to be lagging behind their public sector counterparts in setting up these committees.
<b>EE</b>	<i>Trade unions' impact on working conditions in Estonia</i> (Kallaste, 2004)	The author analysed 66 collective agreements contained in the Collective Agreements Register, administrated by the Ministry of Social Affairs ( <u>Sotsiaalministeerium</u> ). The analysis was conducted in June 2003.	The research found that where there is no trade union present, working conditions are set at the minimum statutory level; trade unions have the power to raise the standard of working conditions for workers they represent.
<b>ES</b>	Spanish <u>Survey on Quality of Life in the Workplace</u> ( <i>Encuesta de Calidad de Vida en el Trabajo</i> ), conducted by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs (Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, <u>MTAS</u> ) on an annual basis.	The 2006 survey interviewed some 9,086 working people over the age of 16, living in family households. Participants' satisfaction levels were assessed in relation to collective agreements.	Average satisfaction levels were 5.7 out of 10. The participants were most satisfied with the promotion of gender equality (7.2), holidays and time off (7.1); they were least satisfied with social subsidies (5.4) and wages and supplements (5.5).
<b>FI</b>	Maintenance of Work Ability (MWA) Barometers – conducted in 1998, 2001 and 2004 by the	Telephone interviews of a sample of private and public sector workplaces. At each workplace, the aim was to conduct three	Two thirds of respondents in the 2004 barometer survey reported that attitudes towards MWA activities were positive at their

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
	Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (Työterveyslaitos, <u>TTL</u> ) and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health ( <u>Sosiaali- Ja Terveysministeriö</u> ).	interviews using slightly different questionnaires, one of which was addressed to a management representative, one to an employee representative and one to a representative of the occupational health service. Each MWA Barometer involves some 800 workplaces with over 2,200 persons interviewed.	workplace; some 90% of the respondents believed that MWA activities were beneficial for their workplace.
<b>FR</b>	Survey on industrial relations and company bargaining ( <i>Relations professionnelles et négociations d'entreprise</i> , REPONSE) – DARES	Questionnaire-based survey of 3,000 establishments in 2004–2005.	In relation to the issue of working time, a quarter of the establishments surveyed with at least 20 employees had used the system of ‘mandating’ for negotiating the reduction of working time.
<b>IE</b>	Survey on the extent and outcomes of workplace partnership arrangements (O’Dowd, 2002)	The survey examined about 150 workplace partnerships in unionised companies in Ireland, by looking at management responses.	Managers expressed a view that business performance and workforce productivity had increased. A number of managers also indicated that job satisfaction had risen and that pay and working conditions had improved due to partnership. The research concluded that the most positive outcomes of partnerships were obtained by employers, in terms of better quality relationships and performance.
<b>IT</b>	Surveys carried out in the Reggio Emilia province in 2002 and 2005 (Pini and Delsoldato, 2005)	The 2002 survey includes interviews with both managers and delegates councils in around 200 companies with more than 50 employees. The 2005 survey interviewed delegates councils only, in companies with more than 20 employees, resulting in 192 completed questionnaires.	The findings revealed higher employee involvement in the more innovative companies and lower involvement in the more traditional enterprises. Social dialogue has an impact on areas such as collective incentives, working time, tasks and qualifications.
<b>LT</b>	Survey on employee training and education	A total of 178 enterprises with collective agreements	Some 51% of respondents in the public sector and 57% or

Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
	(2005), conducted under EU EQUAL initiative	and trade union representation responded, between September and December 2005.	respondents in the private sector reported that improvements to employee qualifications and re-skilling was ensured through collective agreements.
<b>MT</b>	<i>Trends in collective bargaining in Malta: 1998–2003</i> (Centre for Labour Studies, University of Malta)	Analysis of two sets of data: the first set consisted of 80 collective agreements from 46 organisations; the second set related to data from semi-structured interviews with trade union representatives, employers and HR managers.	Where trade unions and employers negotiate collective agreements, provisions on special leave – including maternity, adoption, birth, marriage, unpaid parental leave and paid jury service leave – go beyond the statutory provisions.
<b>NL</b>	Evaluation of the four-year Health and Safety Covenant for the hotels and restaurant sector (2000–2004), conducted by <u>TNO</u> (Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research)	Questionnaire-based survey of a random sample of 8,000 employees in the hotels and restaurants sector in 2000. The survey was repeated in 2004 with a new sample of 13,000 employees, which resulted in some 2,345 respondents.	Overall, the evaluation found that work-related stress in the sector declined by 13.2% between 2000 and 2004. More specifically, work-related stress fell by 10.1% for kitchen staff, 16.9% for waiting staff, and 12.5% for the other groups. Costs related to sickness absence were reduced by €7 million, or 26%, over the four years (2000–2004).
<b>NO</b>	Survey carried out on behalf of the <u>Fafo</u> Norwegian research institute (Trygstad, 2006)	Interviews with employer and employee representatives	Companies with agreements signed under the national tripartite Agreement on an Inclusive Working Life (IW-Agreement) or with collective agreements take more responsibility for employees who need to have their workstation and workplace adjusted following illness and/or due to disability.
<b>SE</b>	Survey of regional health and safety representatives – carried out on behalf of the Swedish Confederation of Trade Unions (Landsorganisationen i	A total of 535 regional safety representatives (elected by LO) in three sectors – construction, manufacturing and services – participated in the survey.	Some 94.8% of respondents overall indicated that their work as regional safety representatives had contributed to improving the working environment. Furthermore, over 50% of the respondents within the



Country	Survey	Methodology	Main findings
	Sverige, <u>LO</u> ) in 2006 (Gellerstedt, 2007)		construction and services sectors stated that both management and employees acted in a passive manner in relation to work environment matters.
<b>SI</b>	Survey on HRM practices in Slovenian companies, carried out in the spring of 2001 and 2004 by the Centre for Organisational and Human Resources Research ( <u>COHR</u> ) at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Ljubljana	Postal questionnaire sent to all Slovenian companies employing at least 200 employees. The response rate in 2001 was 38.8% (205 organisations) and 30.8% (161 organisations) in 2004.	The influence of trade unions and other representative bodies is increasing. In particular, the use of these bodies as a means of communicating with employees is growing. However, trade unions and other representative bodies did not appear to have a significant influence on training issues.
<b>UK</b>	<u>Workplace Employment Relations Survey (WERS) 2004</u>	This cross-section survey comprised interviews with about 2,300 managers and almost 1,000 employee representatives, along with questionnaires completed by over 20,000 employees. This represents a response rate of 64%, 77% and 61%, respectively.  In a separate panel survey (see <u>abstract</u> ), around 950 workplaces that took part in the previous Workplace Employee Relations Survey (1998) were revisited to provide an accurate picture of how workplaces had changed in the period between the two surveys. The main fieldwork ran from February 2004 to April 2005.	The presence of collective bargaining was also associated with entitlement to a wider range of fringe benefits. Where a recognised trade union was not present, companies negotiated, consulted or informed employees about only one of 12 terms and conditions items, compared with nine items in unionised companies. Companies with trade unions were also more likely to have an equal opportunities policy in place, along with flexible working policies, and enhanced leave provisions for employees with caring responsibilities.

## Annex 2: Country codes and abbreviations

**Table A2: Country codes**

*This table outlines the country codes for the EU27 Member States and Norway*

Country code	Country name
AT	Austria
BG	Bulgaria
BE	Belgium
CY	Cyprus
CZ	Czech Republic
DE	Germany
DK	Denmark
EE	Estonia
EL	Greece
ES	Spain
FI	Finland
FR	France
HU	Hungary
IE	Ireland
IT	Italy
LT	Lithuania
LU	Luxembourg
LV	Latvia
MT	Malta
NL	Netherlands
NO	Norway
PL	Poland
PT	Portugal
RO	Romania
SE	Sweden
SI	Slovenia
SK	Slovakia
UK	United Kingdom

## **Abbreviations used**

EU15 – 15 EU Member States before May 2004 (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Sweden and the UK)

EU27 – 27 EU Member States, comprising the EU15, the 10 new Member States that joined the EU in May 2004, in addition to Bulgaria and Romania, which joined the EU in January 2007.

GDP – gross domestic product

HRM – human resource management

HSE – Health and Safety Executive, UK

MWA – maintenance of work ability

OSHA – European Agency for Safety and Health at Work

SMEs – small and medium-sized enterprises

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