



2nd Transnational Workshop of the European Employee Network Agricultural Machinery

“Agricultural Machinery in time of crisis and restructuring – Exchange of
employee experience and strategies”

Prague, 24th & 25th February 2010



Overview

Hosted by the Czech trade unions **OS KOVO**, trade union and employee representatives from Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Hungary and Poland came together for the second transnational workshop of the European Employee Network Agricultural Machinery at the Olympik Artemis Hotel **in Prague**. The workshop was chaired by **Wolf Jäcklein** of the EMF as the main project coordinator.

Following the project`s first workshop end of 2009 in Madrid, this transnational workshop had its thematic focus on the impact of the current financial and economic turmoil and was dedicated to the topic of “*Agricultural Machinery in time of crisis and restructuring – Exchange of employee experience and strategies*”. The second workshop was attended by 21 participants, mainly from **Eastern and Northern member states of the European**



Union. Trade unions and employee representatives exchanged their experiences and positions on the impact of the current global crisis on agricultural machinery in Europe and actively participated in a discussion on “good work”, precarious working conditions and the situation of agency workers in their respective home countries. Further important points discussed were the future of the project and demands for a common declaration which will be agreed upon by all project partners and published at the final conference – the Employee Forum European Agricultural Machinery 2020 - in June 2010 in Brussels.

1st day

The workshop was officially opened by **Josef Stredula**, the president of the Czech trade union OS KOVO with a welcome address and a presentation providing an overview on the current economic situation of the Czech Republic in times of the global crisis.

Workshop participants briefly introduced themselves and expressed their expectations on the 2-day workshop. The Hungarian participant **Lászlóné Szilágyi** from VASAS stated to be very interested on how employee representatives and trade unions dealt with the effects of the crisis in their companies and national sector. **Thomas Grammelhofer** from Pro-Ge (formerly gmtn) in Austria expressed his interest to continue and to deepen this network project and the already established cooperation. A participant from the Czech Republic raised the question how employers in the other countries abused the crisis to draw benefits on expense of the workers.

Kim Schütze of Wilke, Maack and Partner presented an outline of the project’s work plan for 2010, its main activities and the role of project partners in the context of the European Employee Network. She also presented the project’s website and the European Map of Agricultural Machinery with its three-fold structure. This European Map provides information on the sector in each European member state participating in this network through I) country profiles, II) sector reports and III) company profiles. The main project coordinator **Wolf Jäcklein** of the EMF summarised the interim results of the workshop in Madrid and made suggestions on the planning and organisational structure of the European Employee Forum Agricultural Machinery, which will take place on the 10th and 11th of June 2010 in Brussels and shall serve as the final conference of this project’s phase. The Employee Forum will consist of two differently organised parts: the first day shall serve as an internal meeting of all project partners from the 10 countries, the second day shall be opened to political actors, employee organisation, customers and the media.

This presentation was followed by the first round table discussion of the workshop, in which the trade union representatives and employee representatives from OS KOVO in the Czech Republic, Pro-GE in Austria, IG Metall in Germany, ACV-CSC Metea and ABVV Metaal in Belgium and NSZZ Solidarność in Poland exchanged information on the topic: “Agricultural machinery in the context of the global crisis: current situation of the sector and positions of trade unions”.

Participants presented their sector reports with information on the sector, number of employees and main companies, their product range and reported from different measures to handle the effects of the current financial crisis in their home countries. As the president of the hosting trade union OS KOVO, **Josef Stredula** opened the first session with a presentation on the agricultural machinery sector in the Czech Republic and referred to his difficulties to find data specifically on this sector. He pointed out that a future revision of the



European agricultural policy and a possible reduction of subsidies will have a serious impact on the sector and forecasted that only major companies will survive such a change in the Czech Republic. In view to the final conference in Brussels, he suggested to invite a representative from the new EU Commission DG Agriculture and Rural Development and from the Agri Committee of EU Parliament in order to hear about the future plans of the EU.

The trade union representative **Thomas Grammelhofer** reported that in Austria short time work needed to be permitted by the social partners. In this phase, employees receive 90% of their salary, which is financed by the companies and the Austrian Employment Office. **Alois Schlager** from Steyr criticised the increasing pressure on the employees as the employers tended to avoid benefits for the workforce.

Joachim Stöber from the IG Metall presented the situation of the metal and electronic engineering industry of Germany in which the agricultural machinery sector represents a significant component with about 60.000 employees. In regard to the entire metal and electronic engineering sector he pointed out that the crisis has caused a redundancy of 28.000 jobs and a cut down in demands of 30 % in 2009 for the agricultural machinery sector only. According to his prognosis, the entire German metal and electronic engineering sector will only recover and reach a pre-crisis condition in 2013. For the future work of the project, he demanded an identification of common challenges and fields of action also with focus on the global problems caused by the US market and Indian competitors. His presentation on Germany was complemented by **Gabriele Formann** from AGCO and **Kai Blasius** from John Deere, who both spoke about the situation in their companies in face of the crisis. Kai Blasius mentioned that his company had signed an agreement restricting the number of agency workers to only 12 % of the entire workforce while offering the same salary.

Steve Temmerman from New Holland in Antwerp referred to a particularly interesting anti-crisis measure based on great and exceptional solidarity between the white collar and blue collar workers at his company. In times of crisis, both employee groups chose "stamping" (a system to collect unemployment benefits, "being on the dole") in order to avoid redundancies at the company site. He further explained that this particular anti-crisis measure is not secured in a written collective agreement, instead based on an oral negotiation process between the management and the two responsible trade unions. **Wolf Jäcklein** praised this specific measure ("solidarity stamping") as an important tool serving as a good practice example for the network or even further for the work of the EMB.

The Polish representative **Stefan Boczek** from CNH is a member of the largest trade union in Poland Solidarność and reported that Polish employers hindered the founding of works councils and even dismissed workers who were actively involved in organising the workforce. Another serious problem of his country was the lack of employer organisations. He stated that there was no employer organisation representing companies of the agricultural machinery sector. In practise, Polish trade unions negotiated collective agreements directly with the management, which has led to good results in companies with an active employee representative body.

In a vivid discussion on the topic of precarious working conditions and agency workers, **Josef Stredula** referred to a special network established already 2,5 years ago between the Austrian Pro-Ge, OS KOVO, IG Metal and the Slovakian trade union called the Vienna memorandum group which is intensively dealing with the dangerous phenomenon of agency workers. The referred to the current situation in his country, in which some of the 2400



registered agencies clearly benefit from the situation of their clients. Most of the agency workers are from 3rd countries (e.g. Ukraine, Vietnam or Afghanistan) and are only permitted to stay in the Czech Republic for the duration of their working contract. Agencies tend to abuse the particularly difficult situation of their workers, demand a share of the workers earnings for transport and accommodation who only receive an average wage of one to two EURO per hour. He summarised his trade union demands for the same wages and working conditions as other employees and referred to the beginning cooperation between the association of agencies and OS KOVO. Moreover he pointed out that the current phenomenon may not be explained by seasonal changes, instead employers preferred employees they may dismiss within one hour. The Polish representative explained that agency workers were seriously exploited by their agencies, which he labelled "slave masters".

In general the workshop participants agreed on the need to tackle the problem of precarious working conditions, precarious employment contracts and the undercutting of wages through temporarily employed agency workers providing cheaper labour on an ad hoc basis. Mainly participants from new EU member states shared similar experiences in their undertakings and countries in regard to an unfortunate competitive situation between the previously employed workforce and agency workers. Therefore it was requested that the Agritech employee network should further exchange national experiences on this issue and draw conclusions for the common declaration.

2nd day

The second day of the workshop began with the continuation of the round table discussion of the previous day and was chaired by **Joachim Stöber** from the IG Metal. **Jouko Reijonen**, a researcher of the Finnish workers Union Metallilitto held a presentation on the current situation of the agricultural machinery sector in Finland outlining an overview on the sector, the five major companies, current challenges due to the effects of the economic crisis and the main trade union demands. While in Finland, only one company (Valtra) produces agricultural tractors, the production of forestry machinery is very important and has suffered significantly from cutbacks in demands reflected in a 50 % drop in turnover in 2009. In difference to other countries presented in the project, Finland does not employ agency workers in the sector. Jouko Reijonen reported that Valtra's workforce was temporarily laid off for a few weeks and that 100 employees were made redundant due to a significant production decrease in 2009. However he forecasted a recovery for the leading Finnish companies in 2010.

Sándor Barasz kai from the Hungarian trade union VASAS and **Alois Kazelle**, an employee representative from Zetor in the Czech Republic both referred to comparable difficulties in dealing with the employers' strategies of wage cuts and demanding unpaid overtime during the crisis. It was clearly stated that the employers were definitely taking advantage of the workers' situation and attempting savings under the pretext of the crisis.

Wolf Jäcklein gave a summary on the EMF campaign "For more secure employment – against precarious work" and the second EMF common demand for collective bargaining rounds. He pointed out every worker's right for continuous training and qualification has already been incorporated in regional collective agreements. The situation of temporary agency workers is an important topic of the EMF campaign, which specifically demands



equal treatment of temporary agency workers and the comparable workers in the user company.

In view to the drafting of the common declaration of the European Employee Network Agricultural Machinery 2010 which shall be collectively adopted and officially published in Brussels, the workshop participants gathered their suggestions and demands in a team working session. Aside from ideas for the declaration draft, another significant aspect was to discuss the future of the project, after the ending of the current funding period.

In the concluding discussion which was again chaired by **Joachim Stöber**, he summarised the project partners' suggestions in regard to the declaration and the general future of the network. Amongst other, the following remarks were made repeatedly:

- The European Employee Network is a successful and important project bringing together trade union representatives and employee representatives from 10 European countries and will serve as a good practice example for the EMF in regard to further sectors.
- Common standards for agency workers and against precarious work shall be adopted on the European level.
- The initiation of an exchange programme for employee representatives within agricultural machinery companies and/or on a European level was suggested.
- The project has laid the foundation for internal exchange and meetings between employee representatives from CNH. The EMF has offered its support to organise a meeting between employee representatives from Belgium, Austria, Czech Republic and Poland one day before the Employee Forum in Brussels.
- The project partners commonly expressed their interest in continuously working together and to exchange information on their work in the sector even after the official end of the financial support from the EU.
- At the same time the quality of the website and the exchange very much depends on the active participation and involvement of project partners. Electronic communication means (email and website) offer and facilitate exchange, the network needs to benefit from.

In regard to the upcoming conference in Brussels and the drafting of the common declaration of the European Employee Network Agricultural Machinery, **Wolf Jäcklein** and **Joachim Stöber** promised to include the results from Prague and the participants' suggestions in the context of the next meeting of the project's steering group at the EMF mid of March 2010.

All presentations and further information as well as pictures of the workshop are available on the networks' website:
<http://netkey40.iqmetall.de/homepages/netzwerk-landtechnik-en/euworkshops/workshopprague032010.html>



Workshop Programme

23rd February 2010: Arrival of participants and joint dinner in the evening	
24th February 2010	
9:00	Welcome address, objectives of the workshop and introduction round <i>Josef Stredula, President of OS KOVO</i> <i>Wolf Jäcklein, EMF</i>
09:30	Information about the European Employee Network Agricultural Machinery - Main activities, website, European Map of Agricultural Machinery <i>Kim Schütze</i>
10:15 Coffee break at 10:30	Session 1: Agricultural Machinery in the context of crisis – the current situation of the sector and positions of trade unions - Introduction - Report/presentation by OS KOVO - Report/presentation by Pro-Ge - Report/presentation by VASAS <i>Reports followed by discussion and information on the situation in single companies</i>
12:30	Lunch break
14:00 Coffee break at 15:30	Continuation of Session 1 - Report/presentation by NSZZ Solidarność - Report/presentation metalliliitto - Report/presentation by IG Metall <i>Reports followed by discussion and reports on the situation in single companies</i>
16:30	Conclusion of Session 1 - Summary of results and outlook, <i>Wolf Jäcklein/Eckhard Voss</i>
17:00	Guided walk through the old city of Prague
25th February 2010	
09:00	Session 2: „Good Work?“ – The development of working conditions, precarious jobs and joint demands in this context - Introduction: The EMF campaign <i>Round table with company representatives focusing on the following issues/questions:</i> - Is the crisis worsening labour conditions? - Precarious jobs and strategies to respond - What could be joint demands in this context?
11:30	Future of the European Employee Network - Presentation and discussion of a draft joint statement/position which should be published in the context of the Brussels final conference - Initial ideas on how to continue the network beyond the second funding phase - Open discussion
13:00	End of the workshop



List of participants

	Country	Organisation/ Company	Name	Email
1.	AT	PRO-GE	Thomas Grammelhofer	
2.	AT	PRO-GE	Alois Schlager	
3.	BE	ACV-CSC METEA	Joeri Masschelein	
4.	BE	ABVV-Metaal	Steve Temmerman	
5.	CZ	OS KOVO	Josef Stredula	
6.	CZ	OS KOVO	Lucie Studnicova	
7.	CZ	OS KOVO	Jiri Hodac	
8.	CZ	OS KOVO	Alois Kazelle	
9.	CZ	OS KOVO	Oldrich Kubu	
10.	DE	IG Metall	Kim Schütze	
11.	DE	IG Metall	Joachim Stöber	
12.	DE	IG Metall	Kai Blasius	
13.	DE	IG Metall	Gabriele Formann	
14.	FI	Metalliliitto	Erkki Moisio	
15.	FI	Metalliliitto	Jouko Reijonen	
16.	HU	VASAS	Sándor Baracscai	
17.	HU	VASAS	István Rónaszéki	
18.	HU	VASAS	Lászlóné Szilágyi	
19.	PL	Solidarność	Stefan Boczek	
20.	PL	Solidarność	Andrzej Kierzkowski	
21.	EU	EMF	Wolf Jäcklein	