

1.4.2. Trade union alliance check list.

1.4.2.c. Cross - reference

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1.4.2.d. How to relate with other members

In order to provide a wider range of information about communication within Europe anWorks Councils, we present some points after a previous research, edited by a group of mainly German trade unionists and experts. The purpose of this manual conceived by the Leonardo innovation transfer project TEAM.EWC is to provide and distribute a seminar concept for trainers and coaches of EWCs. The main focus of the material is on the development of intercultural competence, legal and organisational frameworks for EWCs and target-setting and decision-making processes.

TEAM.EWC provides shared indications about “How to relate with other members” “inter-cultural communication” and language «European network of workers’ representatives: Within the European Works Council the scope and potential to include the members of the committee, as well as those of the national workers’ representation, into a communication network should be utilised. This network should be coordinated by the steering group of the European Works Council and supported from the trade union side. In this way the European Works Council can make a contribution both to the improved cooperation and to the intercultural understanding within – and also on a national level and it can help improve the communication between the company employees, especially for those in countries where workers’ representation on a national level, and hence the opportunity to share information among each other, does not exist.

Cultural differences between people and groups are historically shaped by their background of class, age, education, gender and personal experience. Cultural values are neither static nor exclusively defined by nationality. Enhancing intercultural competence for EWCs should cover two aspects:

- Firstly, getting to know other people’s understanding of themselves as employee representatives, and thereby getting an overview of the different systems of interest representation in the countries of the EWC members.
- Secondly, learning about differences in the social behaviour and interaction between people in general, which are influenced by historically developed cultural traditions, and how these may interfere with the joint work in the EWC.»

TEAM.EWC summarizes in actual and effective words, taking a clear position about Language barriers and intercultural bridging:

«Language barriers and inter-cultural challenges: differences between language and culture play an important role in the development of the communication among workers’ representatives, and with the management, and should not be underestimated. This challenge must be faced and the problems that appear in this context must be solved.

Language problems: The issue has been accompanying the European Works Council from the very beginning. It is clear that it is of great help for the development of mutual relationships if one can communicate in a common language. This common language can only be English, according to our present understanding. So there is no other option but to accept the fact that anyone who wants to make a meaningful contribution to a European Works Council for a considerable duration of time should be in command of the English language or at least learn the language. English is not only the global language of management; it also offers many benefits regarding the acquisition of skill which other languages cannot offer. For example, it is fairly easy to reach a level of proficiency on

which one can make oneself understood (without mistakes) relatively quickly. Hence EWC members have the opportunity to converse outside of meetings about questions concerning everyday life, particularly about working life.

Usually, the language skills of EWC members tend not to be sufficient enough to comprehend complex issues, let alone to make representations thereof. This is why it is indispensable to make use of interpreters and of translations of significant documents. Therefore, interpreters and translated documents must be provided to any EWC member who requires either one or the other. This has to be stipulated in the agreement in implicit terms. Also: anyone who has managed to find a reliable interpreter should, where possible, use them in every meeting – this will improve understanding even further. To develop effective communication within a group working across cultures, it is important that people reflect on their own cultural values, are able to scrutinize them from time to time, and tune in to the mindset of others as well as enhance their own abilities “see themselves as others see them”.»