

WORKERS' PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT

WORKSTREAM 2 – EXPERIMENT

Since the Montenegrin Employers Federation was a partner on the projects "WIM" and "WIM2", WIM3 required us to go a step further, that is, to concretize the experiences we have gained by participating in these projects, and to bring our activities from the theoretical to the practical level. We do this by simulating the formation of workers' councils in a Montenegrin company. This experiment implies that in this company, for the purposes of the WIM3 project, and in accordance with the established regulation, a workers' council will be established, which will try to show its functioning and characteristics to the employer and employees, as well as to the interested public.

Finding a company that would like to take part in „founding“ of the WC experiment was a pretty challenging task. First, it was necessary to find a company with at least 20 employees, which, given the above statistics on the structure of the economy, was not easy. Furthermore, the fact that workers' councils are not legal obligations and that the law does not regulate them at all makes employers and employees not too motivated to take the matter more seriously.

However, both management and employees of a family-owned firm from the south of Montenegro - Mitrovic & Co, recognized the potential benefits and their interest in being the first in Montenegro to be a part of the experiment. Mitrovic & Co operates in the tourism and education sector, they have from 25 to 50 employees (depending on the period of the year), and at the company level they do not have an organized trade union. In preparatory meetings with representatives of the Montenegrin Employers Federation and the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro, the management and employees of the company expressed their interest in workers' councils as a form of social dialogue, which they believe could be applicable in their company in the future. After the election procedure was completed, the conditions for the newly elected council to become operational were met. The employee representative was involved in all significant management activities which was an opportunity to see his company from the inside and from a different perspective. Management informed the employee representative about the annual financial statements, short and long-term goals of the company, procedure of preparation for the tourist season, etc. Also, an employee representative was consulted about staff planning for the coming season. However, certain amount of reserve with employees is registered when it comes to the institute of workers' councils, the general view was that they did not expect that such a form of social dialogue would be implemented in the domestic legislation in the future. In addition, the general impression is that employee participation and consultation in the decision-making process could strengthen the overall situation of Montenegrin companies, but that such cooperation would need to be established on healthy and strong grounds. Employees expressed satisfaction that they were enabled, and they are probably the first in Montenegro, to gain some knowledge about this form of social dialogue. They are aware that this was "only" an experiment and that the situation would be different if it was grounded in the positive legal regulations of Montenegro. Whether it is a legal obligation or not, employees have seen the positive



aspects of this institute, appreciating the rights it secures, but also the opportunity to view the company from a new angle. In addition to their specific workplace and the day-to-day tasks that need to be accomplished, for the health and growth of the company, every element of it needs to be dedicated to achieving success. The conclusion is that works councils are a formal and orderly mechanism of what every company should have in practice - mutual trust, understanding and respect between social partners at company level.

Undoubtedly, the experiment conducted during the WIM3 project brought with it a new value to the company, especially when it comes to the relationship between management and employees, but interpersonal relationships in general. It also helped them to establish a framework within which they can improve their internal relations in the future and therefore the success of their business, which are values of great importance regardless of whether or not workers' councils formally become part of the legal system of Montenegro.

1. USEFUL LINKS

- <https://www.zds.si/en/projects/wim3/default.html>
- <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=707>
- <https://www.worker-participation.eu/>
- www.poslodavci.org

