

Project

“Informed and Experienced for Sustainable Agriculture” - Enhancing the information and consultation capacity of the social partners in sector of Agriculture for active participation in working life for sustainable Agriculture
Ref. VS/2012/003/0305

Steering Committee Meeting PM1, Sofia 11.09.2012 *Minutes*

The meeting took place in the period 10 -12.09.2009 in Sofia.

All the project partners were invited by the leading partner - FNSZ to take part on the First Steering Committee meeting after receiving the project Agreement from the Commissions' side. The meeting was attended by 17 participants – all concerned on the Project idea and goals: Agrostar – Romania, ALPA - Italy, IG BAU - Germany, Agrosindikat – Macedonia and the 3 partner's organizations from Bulgaria – FNSZ, BAAP and RCAC - Veliko Tarnovo. The French partner - FGA CFDT was absent due to previous engagement arrangement in his organization, but was declaring full support to the partnership work. All the mentioned participants were presenting, both the employees and employer' representatives in the partnership. Representatives from Agricultural media have also followed the meeting. External experts from Réseau Projective, chosen for the purpose of efficient project implementation, and from Bulgarian National Confederation of Trade unions, CITUB, took also part on the project meeting and played an important role during the work. All the participants were provided in advance and on the spot with all necessary working documents.

The work started with a pre-planning meeting of the Project manager and project coordinator with the experts from Réseau Projective in order to agree the program and the structure of the work during the Steering committee meeting and during the project lifecycle. The discussion covered also the concept of research and analytical work expected by the partnership from the experts' side.

The meeting on 11.09.2012 started by welcoming speech of Mrs. Sv. Vasileva, the President of leading organization FNSZ and Project Manager. She presented all the partners in the partnership, stressing on the fact that this is collaboration with traditions and results both at national and European level in the frame of Social dialogue. She pointed the significant role of the information and consultation of the employees as a part of the European social model and as a democratic form for the Social Dialogue process and its role for developing the social economic life of Bulgaria now a days. The reality shows that there is still insufficient understanding and knowledge on possibilities and realization of the rights of information and consultation of employees especially in the sector of Agriculture, where the small and medium size farms prevail. What is the state of play of the systems of I&C in the Agricultural sector in the new member-states and candidate countries where a very hard process of transformation of planned to liberal economy has been done and the impact of employment and workers and employees has been dramatic. More over the structural changes in Agriculture are still in play in respect to the future of CAP. How could the transnational experience and good practice examples to be positively used and adjusted by the partnership so to create innovative solutions for anticipating changes and increasing the involvement of the employees in the management process. The impact of this concrete project we expect to contribute to improvement the current situation in the sector and to promote the active participation of employees by working in the established Partnership.

All the participants took the floor in order to present themselves from their organizational background viewpoint and their expectations regarding the project objectives.

Mrs. Doyka Petrova, Regional Council of Agricultural Cooperatives - Veliko Tarnovo shared its belief that the agricultural cooperatives are a unique model where the social rights of the workers could be exercised properly and she stated that they work very hard for involving workers and employees in the life of enterprises. She expects an additional place for developing the collaboration between FNSZ and Council of cooperatives.

Dilyana Haralanova, AZPB/BAAP presented her organization as a modern agricultural employers' one which members are active farmers with experience in the social dialogue and ambitions to use it for sustainable agriculture in Bulgaria. By participating on this project work she expects to get more experience and information regarding innovative practices in the field of employee's involvement in agriculture.

Mr. Jivko Danevski, Agrosindikata, Macedonia congratulated the hosting organization and shared his expectations for strengthening the discussion on workers' rights on I&C and its implementation on the Macedonian Labour Law. He also underlined that Agrosindikata expects to develop this process through the collective bargaining process and social dialogue.

Mr. Tudor Dorobantu, Agrostar, Romania stated the good relations between Bulgarian and Romanian sectoral trade unions organizations in the latest years, united due to same problems and challenges in agriculture but also because in this way of solidarity "...we could get Europe closely to us." He underlined that because of this project we could reach together better access to information and free will performance of the workers in agriculture, because only united, informed and experienced we could make the politicians to take the most favorable solutions. The importance of the EFFAT in this process is out of any doubt in these difficult times of crisis.

Mrs. Francheska Zappala, ALPA, Italy, gave the warm greetings from ALPA President to the participants and stressed, that for her organization this project is important because in times of crisis (the Italian Agriculture is affected very much as well) it gives a space for interaction between the old and the new EU countries for developing strategy and solutions for turning the agriculture from a primary sector in an important and significant and sustainably developed in each European country. ALPA is ready to share its experience in this field.

Mr. Thomas Hentschel, IG BAU underlined the willingness of IG BAU to share its information and experience in the field of Information and consultation process with focus on strengthening the Agricultural partners' cooperation. He also shared his own pessimism regarding the economic crisis nowadays but also stressed that in this hard time is a very moment to motivate the people to search information, to do qualification and training and initiate actions in order to seek solutions. In respect to the implementation of I&C process into the practice the workers and employees have to be motivated to participate on the important discussion on coming in 2014 Common agricultural policy and the restructuring processes in agriculture after it – because of high requirements for competitiveness a lot of small farmers will become employed workers, season work also brings a lot of negatives to the employed.

Mr. Jean Pierre Klapush, Réseau Projective and external expert from the network of EFFAT, talked on the lack of specialized councils of workers' representatives of in the sector of Agriculture because of the specific limitations in the Directive 2002/14 on I&C. He said that in this project we expect to make an advance in the field of implementation of I&C process in the new EU countries.

Mrs. Tatyana Mihailova, researcher and expert in the field of I&C process in Confederation of independent trade unions in Bulgaria spoke about the history of the process in Bulgarian context in the early 90-is. In 1992 has been set the beginning of the process of I&C in Bulgaria. She alarmed that a big part of the Bulgarian workers and employees do not have right on social dialogue and collective bargaining, on information and consultation and strike (public servants, etc.). More over, a lot of Bulgarian workers do not know that the right of I&C is a fundamental right. The interaction between the trade unions and workers representatives is also an important question to be studied and discussed in order to use all forms of dialogue and protection in favor of workers and employees. She stressed that there is a space for work on that – that's why the CITUB starts a massive information campaign on I&C this month - and wished a success to the project partnership in its action.

The project coordinator Mrs. Valentina Vasilyonova presented the frame of the project – aims, tasks, expected results timetable and methodology of work via PowerPoint Presentation.

Mr. Patric Coudron, expert in Reseau Projectives presented the methodology of work in the project lifecycle according to the external experts chosen for the purposes of project. He underlined that this year EFFAT and employers celebrate 50 Years anniversary of functioning the Sectoral Social dialogue committee in Europe. One of the most ambitious aims of EFFAT and partners is to develop and exercise autonomous social dialogue in the sector in every European country. That's why a number of projects for education on specific themes are implemented in order to get more informed, more experienced, more equipped to be efface the border and inequality between the new and old member states in Europe. Having regard the fact that the solidarity in Europe will continue and the specific of the region the experts will work to develop the autonomies of the social partners and their interaction, to develop the transnational cooperation between the partners and will study and analyze the behavior and attitude of the social partners in the pilot countries. The external experts will give their input on elaborating recommendations for improving the process and also for increasing the social responsibility in the enterprises.

He underlined the importance of the debate during the discussion in order the legislation initiatives to be undertaken after all.

The panels for debate were opened and the participants discussed the proposed timetable and the project implementation details.

They agreed the dates of the workshops in pilot countries to be postponed for the end of October and beginning of November, so the time table of main activities was set as follow:

Start date	End date	Venue	Type of event
10/09/2012	12/09/2012	Sofia	Steering Committee Meeting PM1
29/10/2012	30/10/2012	Bucharest	Workshop 1 WS RO
01/11/2012	03/11/2012	Sofia	Workshop 2 WS BG
05/11/2012	07/11/2012	Skopje	Workshop 3 WS MK Steering Committee Meeting PM2
03/07/2013	04/07/2013	Sofia	Transnational Conference
05/07/2013	05/07/2013	Sofia	Steering Committee Meeting PM3

It was also agreed by the partners each of the three workshops to be followed by one expert from the Steering committee – partner from old member country.

A special attention was given to the study part of the project – it was decided the Questionnaire for gathering information for the state of play of the process I&C in agriculture will be elaborated by the experts as an standardized form with opened and closed questions and will be distributed in all partners' organizations. In order to extend the channels for gathering information the workshops and interviews will be used for this purpose.

The work continued in discussing strategy for dissemination and quality assurance of the project. It was proposed and agreed the project partners to use all their channels for spreading information about the project aims and objectives and results.

The project will be announced trough the partners' networks at national and European level. Brochures will be developed and published and disseminate trough the partnership.

The partners agreed the communication strategy and declared their engagement in spreading the project idea and results on their websites.

The partners adopted the strategy for evaluation of the project by performing careful monitoring of the project process, discussing the progress of the project on each phase on the planned Steering committee meetings and if corrective measures were needed to be duly undertaken. All the partners declared their understanding, that Steering Committee is responsible for the quality of the project lifecycle and results.

The project management is responsible for giving adequate information in every moment of the process cycle and to manage the process and report to the Steering committee. For the reason of mutual responsibility of the success of this project, clear financial rules and discipline and transparency till the end of September a special guide will be elaborated by the management and sent to the partners in pilot countries to facilitate the process of action implementation.

The work day finished with the conclusion how important are the cooperation, solidarity and discussions amongst the partners of project to learn from each other to create a culture, knowledge and skills upon the process of information and consultation, by taking actions at European and national levels and to make step forward in creating better place for work and life for the workers in agriculture.