



**INFORMED
AND EXPERIENCED FOR
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

“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”**

VS/2012/003/0305



ФЕДЕРАЦИЯ НА НЕЗАВИСИМИТЕ СИНДИКАТИ ОТ ЗЕМЕДЕЛИЕТО

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Report/Minutes

of the National Workshop held on 1-3 November 2012 in Sofia, Bulgaria

**Subject: Enhancing the Information and consultation capacity of the social partners in
sector of Agriculture in Bulgaria for active participation in working life**

Venue: Central Park Hotel, Sofia, Bulgaria

Date: 1-3 November 2012

Participants:

a) Trade union representatives and employees:

1. Svetla Vasileva, president of FNSZ
2. Valentina Vasilyonova, vice-president of FNSZ
3. Vasya Shapovalova, Branch TU Council Irrigation systems, trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Ruse
4. Emilia Dimova, Branch TU Council Irrigation systems, trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Pazardjik
5. Daniela Todorova, Branch TU Council Irrigation systems, trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level
6. Galya Bgdanova - Branch TU Council Irrigation systems, trade union activist of basic TU organization at enterprise level, H
7. Lilia Mincheva - Branch TU Council Irrigation systems, trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Sofia
8. Elena Koleva – Branch TU Council Agrarian Academy, Trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Dobrudzha Agricultural Institute, Gen. Toshevo
9. Dean Georgiev - Branch TU Council Agrarian Academy, Trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Institute of animal breeding, Troyan
10. Kristina Kornova - Branch TU Council Agrarian Academy, Trade union leader of basic TU organization at enterprise level, Institute of Pomology, Plovdiv
11. Svetla Maneva - Branch TU Council Agrarian Academy, Trade union leader of basic TU organization at grass root level, Institute of soils, Sofia
12. Natalia Andreeva - Branch TU Council Agrarian Academy, Trade union leader of basic TU organization at grass root level, Institute of soils, Sofia

b) Employer/Enterprise management representatives:

1. Petar Lazov – Association of Grain producers, AZPB/BAAP
2. Iviana Mitova – Agroelit Ltd manager, AZPB/ BAAP
3. Kiril Toshev – Farmer, grain producer, Shumen
4. Simeon Kalchev – Cooperative Izgrev, RCCB, Veliko Tarnovo
5. Daniela Georgieva – Cooperative, Lipniza, RCCB, Veliko Tarnovo
6. Velichko Velichkov – RCCB, Veliko Tarnova
7. Dimitar Metodiev – Manager of Irrigation systems Sofia enterprise

8. Mihail Milchev - Manager of Irrigation systems, Ruse enterprise
9. Zaria Rankova – Deputy Director of Institute of Pomology, Plovdiv
10. Ivan Kiryakov- Director of Dobrudzha Agricultural Institute, Gen. Toshevo
11. Stefanka Draganova – KIT Ltd, Shumen

c) External expert:

1. Thomas Hentschel, IGBAU
2. Martin Meinerling, IGBAU
3. Stojna Serbezova – FNSZ, Lower
4. Tatyana Mihailova – CITUB, researcher in ISSI
5. Chavdar Angelov – CITUB, Network of Collective Bargaining and Rights
6. Veselin Ilkov – Ministry of Labour & Social Policy,

Working languages: Bulgarian - pivot language, German

Preparation of the workshop: Date and place of the National workshop has been agreed together with the plan of main activities by the partnership during the first project steering committee held in Sophia, in September 2012. Date for organizing the workshop. It was clear that during the planned national workshop a consultative focus group of the social partners in Agriculture will be established, consisting of the representatives of workers and employees from the branches Irrigation systems, Agrarian Academy, representatives from employers' site of those branches, agricultural cooperatives, small/medium size farmers, and representatives of the employers' organization AZPB. The focus group will be provided with actual information on legal framework and concept regarding the three chosen topics: the Information and consultation process and procedures, corporate social responsibility and change management. The participants will be trained in an interactive manner in order to increase their knowledge of the topics, to form a critical and proactive focus on participation opportunities in the management of enterprises and to enhance their skills to jointly solve the problems of the sector and to run an effective social dialogue. It was planned the external experience regarding the topics chosen to be included by the German project partner IG BAU. In an active dialogue during the workshop it was planned the information and ideas to be generated in order to facilitate the process of National Recommendations elaboration. That's for an official invitation along with the program of the workshop were sent to the project partners – AZPB, RCCB and IG BAU. All the information about the project aims and workshop's goals was provided in advance. The two types questionnaires for studying situation with Information and consultation in the Agriculture (for employees and employer reps) were sent also in advance and given on the spot. On the spot participants were given with a map with handouts of presentations on the topics, leaflet of the project, practical materials regarding the Information and Consultation mechanism, other materials for the purpose of the workshop. In the plenary a special table was organized with other information materials from the partners' site – magazine Agrozona, leaflets, etc.

Aims of the workshop:

- Participants to gain understanding of the project and its objectives, activities and expected results and increase their knowledge of the topics;
- To gain awareness/understanding of the European Directive 14/2002/EC regarding the Information and consultation of the employees in enterprises – how it is **transposed into** Bulgarian legislation; its effects and efficiency;
- To form a critical and proactive look at participation opportunities in the management of enterprises and to enhance their skills to jointly solve the problems of the sector and to run an effective social dialogue;

- To provide information about the information and consultation of employees in Germany at enterprise level;
- To generate information and ideas for Management / Recommendations processes of informing and consulting in the sector.

Programme: detailed programme attached in appendix and distributed to the participants in advance and on the spot.

Methods

Variety of interactive methods was used during the workshop, which consisted in presentations from the experts, practical examples shared both by the experts and participants, working in groups and discussions.

These methods were established during the planning meeting and they were used efficiently in order to meet the aims of the workshop. The participants expressed their satisfaction by the effectiveness of the methodology applied during the Conclusions panel.

The seminar was opened by Svetla Vasileva, president of FNSZ and project manager. She welcomed all the participants with the interest shown to this workshop and stressed the fact, that because the sector is vulnerable in accessing information, it is important to grow together in our capacity for extending the information and consultation rights in Agriculture. She congratulated the representatives from project partner BAAP and RCC, Veliko Tarnovo and also welcomed the managers from Irrigations systems and Institutes of Agricultural Academia where the I&C procedure are already established. She stressed on the fact, that FNSZ is aware on the importance of I&C as an additional tool for effective social dialogue and started distributing the idea among their organizational structure and supreme body in 2008. This good start shall be spread further in order to benefit workers and employers in agriculture, but more over to create a mutual understanding between both sides for avoiding conflicts and social tension in cases of restructuring, what is very often happening in the sector.

The project coordinator, Valentina Vasilyonova, made a presentation of the project objectives, logic and expected results and outcomes, framing the workshops' aims, mode of conduct and the work during the following two days.

The expert in law Mrs. Stoyna Serbezova spoke to the audience on the legislative framework in Bulgaria, focussing on the implementation of the Directive 14/2002/EC in our Labour Code, giving to the participants highlights which articles cover the subject, what are the strong sites there for the employees and what is still insufficient as texts in the Law. (*Her comments will be basis for the National Guidelines/Recommendations*).

The expert in Information and Consultation mechanism and procedures in Confederation of independent trade unions, CITUB, made specially designed presentation with practical comments on the system of I&C in Bulgaria stressing on the differences between the two types of activists – those included in the Trade unions issues and the other, referred to the I&C. She also underlined the main steps in the process of self-organizing of the workers and employees representatives on I&C and then their performance as employees representatives. The two procedures – of information and consultation were carefully studied by the participants, dividing the employer's responsibilities and obligations and those of the workers' representatives and the field of main issues to be consulted and informed on. Special attention was given to the Agreement between the employer and workers' representatives as final result and working instrument for better communication, dialogue and mutual understanding of the sites in the enterprise.

The participants were given the floor for reflection. The representatives from Dobrudzha Institute spoke on their experience of the process of information and consultation. The director Mr. Kiryakov shared that the information gained right now is very useful for his position. In their

Institute the communication between the employees and employer is channelled since years – the trade union leader constantly takes part in the Council of Directors, thus the access to information is guaranteed. The TU leader Mrs. Koleva added that after 2008 FNSZ organized trainings on Art. 7a of the Labour code and thus in big part of enterprises Committees on I&C were established. She gave the example in the moment of structural change in the Agrarian Academy undertaken in 2010, that had to affect a big number of employees, but because of FNSZ initiative an Agreement was set and social program has been negotiated and applied to the people concerned.

Thomas Hentshel, congratulated the participants, expressing his happiness to discuss together with Bulgarian colleague the problematic of I&C right now in times of heavy crisis. He made a short retrospection of the process in Germany, which has been started in Germany before the World War. He stated that if these representatives had been preserved during the times of Nazism, a lot of difficulties after the war could have been overcoming much easier.

He spoke also about the two main forms of workers involvement and social partnership in Germany – Work councils and Trade unions. He finished his intervention by underlining that workers and employees can protect their interests only if there are good working Work councils and strong Trade unions.

Martin Meinerling, Chair of the Work council in an enterprise of Kartzfehn, IG BAU, spoke in details for the process of work of the Work council in his enterprise. His main conclusion was that even the best law is useless if it is not implemented at the enterprise. That's way the cooperation based on the mutual trust is needed to be developed between the social partners.

The second day of the workshop started with summarising the work of the previous day by Mrs. Tatyana Mihailova. Making an elegant bridge to the theme of corporate social responsibility she resumed the use of Information and consultation systems to promote the good social practices and social responsibility in the enterprises. She gave an example of possible agreement to be concluded that reflects to the specifics of the sector and the necessities of the branch.

Mrs. Vasileva indicated that one of the goals of the Bulgarian focus group is to reach such an agreement in the sector regarding social standards and information and consultation.

Then the theme “Corporate social responsibility” was opened. Mr. Petar Lazov, AZPB/BAAP made an introduction to the concept of CSR, giving the definition of European Commission on CSR as “the responsibility of enterprises for their impacts on society and outlines what an enterprise should do to meet that responsibility”. He also stressed the attention of the participants on the Ethic Code including the principles of full recognition of human rights and ethical consideration as nondiscrimination, balance of working and private life, investments in human resource as trainings, education and research etc, thus to contribute to social, environmental and consumers considerations. He used the floor to make a special reference how Agriculture as sector is socially responsible in his role to produce safety and enough food for the citizens, taking on board the environmental and social issues in regions all over the Europe. This responsibility is familiar for the Bulgarian agricultural enterprises and such forums create space for spreading information and promoting these good practices in large society. He spoke about the charity, developed in many companies – members of AZPB/BAAP and stressed that this is also a cause for the organization as itself. A large number of farmers support the smallest ingredient of the regions – the village communities - by awarding scholarship to students and then hiring youngsters from the local professional schools, financial support to community clubs of sport or other interests, bibliotheca etc. He also mentioned the support of AZPB to the national campaign “Cleaning Bulgaria for one day”, which was an expiring example for the power of social thinking of the citizens.

Mr. Veselin Ilkov, Director of directorate in the Ministry of labor and social affairs, started his intervention with the confession that his own cause is to work to and promote CSR. Then he spoke on the National strategy regarding the CSR, issued in 2009, related to the European key

documents (Green Paper on CSR, Guidelines of the EC, New strategy on CSR from 2011) underlining the need of national strategy because of lack of organized communication and relations between the institutions regarding this issue. He stressed that as far as CSR is a voluntary initiative of the business there is a strong need of increasing the awareness and popularity of the citizens and society toward CSR and also developing a capacity for practicing CSR and promoting good practices regarding the social and environmental issues. Consultative council on CSR by the Minister of LSP is established, where the social partners are included.

During the discussion followed the two speakers Mrs. Vasileva shared the trade unions' point of view marking the fact, that because of lack of coordination between the institutions the enterprises in the sector of Agriculture are excluded of many state measures, created for support the social aspects at enterprise level such education, transport, etc. She also stressed that trade unions work constantly by exercising their main role – collective bargaining and social dialogue and by the Collective agreements concluded could obtain more social advantages for workers and employees.

Ms. Iviana Mitova, Human resource manager in the agricultural firm Agroelit Ltd presented her firm from the point of view of CSR indicating the work done in capacity building of the workers and employees and charity for clubs of retired and young people in the local communities and thus they keep the people to their place, preventing migration trend from the villages to the cities, which is crucial for the region of Targovishte since 20 years.

Mr. Kiril Toshev, farmer and producer from Shumen region, spoke about the problems facing the small and medium size producers, dedicated to agriculture in Bulgarian regions – the work force quality, motivation for remaining and developing the workforce, etc. Nevertheless the problems he underlined the good practices his enterprise has been developing toward 30 workers both employed in stock breeding and mechanization. The farm has its own bakery, cantina and store, where the employees are provided with preference, the working clothes are also organized by the employer, the night- and over time work are paid according the regulations, during the official and religious holydays the both religion communities – Christians and Muslims - are worshiped with different stimulus, all that creates a spirit of unity and involvement of the people and strengthens the community. Finally, this helps to the productivity as well.

Mrs. Daniela Georgieva, finances manager of Agrarian cooperative in Dolna Lipniza, region Veliko Tarnovo also took the floor to share the concerns and small achievements of these unique bodies-cooperatives. She pointed that as a cooperative they show social responsibility every day not only for the 45 employed, but also for the local community. She alarmed on the problems of small villages in the region, where the depopulation is a trend because of lack of social and road infrastructure as kindergarten, school, health care spot etc. The cooperative makes a lot of efforts to turn back this tendency by creating workplaces for people, supporting financially the school buss, to support the culture Centrum in the village and fests of the community. These small steps are desperate attempt to compensate the total resignation of the state in rural areas.

The German experience was included by Mr. Meinerling, who presented a film for the social thinking of his firm and he stressed on the main achievements as: promotion of the health care of the workers and employees, kindergarten fees are supported by the firm, social cash – the phenomena of the German social security system, contracts with vocational schools for stage and employment of students, bonuses for loyal employed, transport costs support etc. – all that achieved because of the social dialogue with the trade unions and work councils.

The resume of the panel was made by Mrs. Vasileva that the theme of CSR in Agriculture is of high interest for the social partners, thus it should be further discussed and good practices promoted and multiplied. That's way it will be one of the focal points of the final transnational conference in July in Sofia.

The final panel of the workshop was dedicated to the Change management. The introduction of the concept was made by Mr. Chavdar Angelov and participants were provoked to work step by step studying his own attitude and mode of flexibility/management to change by working individually and in groups solving different cases. The individual and group work was followed by discussion in plenary and reflection of the trainer. The interest was shown by active involvement of all of the participants to the individual and group work, because the cases were chosen real from their professional life experience. A lot of questions were posed to the reporters and the discussion was vital and useful for the purposes of the workshop and participants' expectations.

The workshop ended with round of feedback of the participants toward the workshop. All of them expressed their positive appreciation of the importance of such meetings as a platform to get together, to get new knowledge and reflections, to share views and to create common strategy of problem solving in Agriculture. It was shared by participants, that "...the seminars of FNSZ as always are perfectly organized, interesting as themes and with attractive people and way of learning."

Conclusions

Having regards the aspects presented in this report, as well as the evaluation made by both participants and experts, we are able to assess the national workshop as a good opportunity to get together the representatives of employees and of enterprise management in order to get knowledge, discuss, analyse and assess the process of information and consultation in agricultural sector and the themes closely linked to this process as change management, corporate social responsibility, where the active involvement and participation of both sides workers and employers are required, to find the weaknesses in this area, to exchange opinions and experiences encountered among participants. This workshop creates a basis for setting a common set of recommendations for improvement of this process, which will be included in the National Guidelines/Recommendations for improving the Information & Consultation and involvement process in Agriculture that will be made within this project.

Written by Valentina Vasilyonova

18.11.2012
Sofia