



**INFORMED  
AND EXPERIENCED FOR  
SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE**

**Project VS/2012/003/0305**

***“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***

### **Third Steering Committee Meeting PM3, Sofia 5.07.2013** *Minutes*

The meeting took place on 5.07.2013 in Grand Hotel Sofia in Sofia, Bulgaria. It followed the Transnational conference, held on 4<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 in Grand Hotel Sofia.

According to the Project Plan adopted and agreed by the partnership during the first Project meeting all the project partners were invited by the leading partner - FNSZ to take part on the Steering Committee meeting PM3. This project meeting was planned to be held after organizing and carried out the Transnational Conference in Sofia.

The meeting was attended by the 16 participants from the partnership: AGROSTAR - Romania, ALPA - Italy, Agrosindikat – Macedonia, FNSZ and BAAP/AZPB – Bulgaria and FGA-CFDT – France, IG BAU and RCCB-Veliko Tarnovo. External expert from Reseau Projective – 2 people, chosen for the purpose of efficient project implementation, took also part on the project meeting and played an important role during the work. The foreign guests (7 people) of the transnational conference from the EFFAT network did also take part in the project meeting, because of the interest to the theme. (*See the participants list attached*).

All the participants were provided in advance and on the spot with all necessary information regarding the meeting aims and working documents. All the partners were aware about the meeting aims which are as follow:

- To check the operation of the partnership and communication between us
- To review progress on the methodology of implementation of activities:
  - Analysis of the state play
  - National brochures / Recommendations
  - Transnational brochure – draft and finalization
- To work on broadcasting and publishing the results
- Revision of the Transnational Conference
- Verify financial flows
- To draw a corrective measure if needed.
- To discuss how to proceed further?

The pre–planning meeting of the Project manager and project coordinator with the expert from Reseau Projective, held on 3<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 aimed to refine the meeting steps and to make a revision of the work done during the period. The discussion covered also the concept of Transnational Brochure, the first draft of it as an analytical work prepared before the Conference, translated into partners’ languages and its finalization after the debate during the conference and PM3 expected by the partnership from the experts’ side.

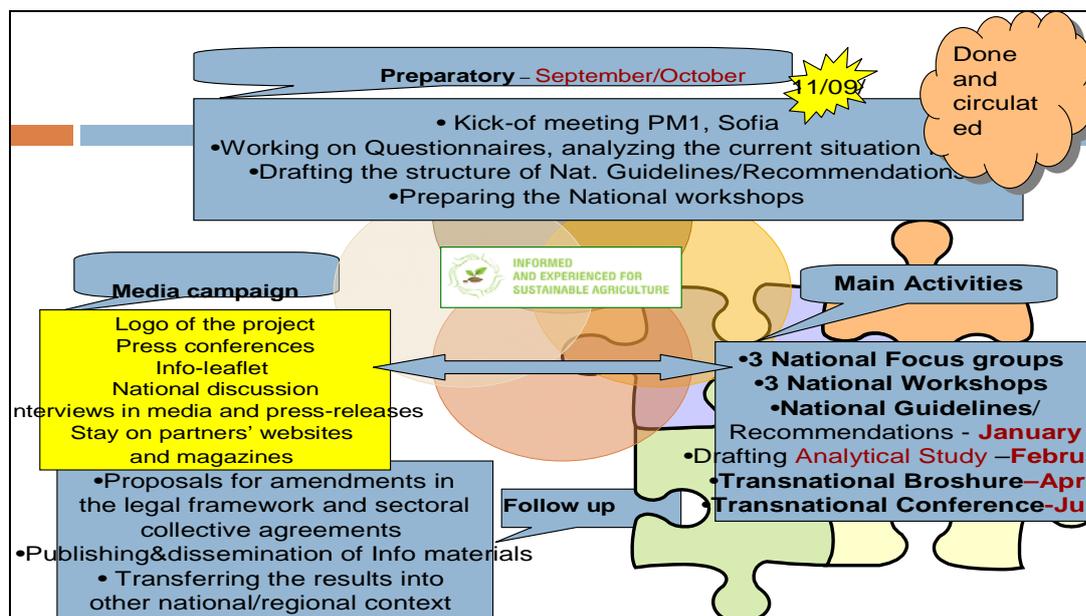
The meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> of July 2013 was opened by the project manager Svetla Vasileva, the President of the hosting organization FNSZ. Once again she expressed the gratitude of FNSZ to the project partnership to come to Sofia in such a time of social crisis and take part on the debate about the rights of the workers and employees in agriculture, on deficit of Information and consultation rights. She referred to the wide media coverage of the issue of social rights of working people in agriculture from the yesterday conference. She congratulated the partnership with the adoption of the political paper, Position, for political will

shown and commitment to unite efforts for common actions for improving the participation of workers and employees in the sector of Agriculture.

The progress of the project was reported by Mrs. Vasilyonova, project coordinator. She made a deep overview of the work done till the moment, especially in the period between the Steering committee meeting PM2 and the present one. The overview was made via Power Point presentation and covered all the issues in the agenda.

The reflection on the project concept and idea was necessary especially for the participants, who are “external” for the project partnership, but interested in the topic of Information and consultation and touched by it in their daily work in social dialogue and collective bargaining process. Moreover, their participation on the conference and meeting extends the scope of project, disseminates the project information, verifies the project partnership conclusions, inspires for new initiatives.

The concept of the revision could be seen in the following mind-map:



A special focus was given to the main activities and indicators especially on:

1. The research process on the realization of rights in the I & C in Agriculture finished in elaboration of the Analytical Study, presented to the partnership in February, (fully to the plan) and then was translated into English and Bulgarian and disseminated to the partners for feedback. In June the Analysis was published for the purposes of the Transnational conference and distributed to all present on the forum.
2. Meanwhile the National Guidelines have been elaborated in the pilot countries Macedonia, Bulgaria and Romania. The national partners worked on a common agreed structure of the paper in order to have a line for comparison and peer review of the state in different countries. They have been finished in January and also circulated to the external experts as an important contribution to the process of analyzing and have been considered in the conclusions and recommendations for the final version of the Study. In the period March-April the bilingual versions of the national guides were published and disseminated amongst the partners organizations. Also published on the website of FNSZ – Project section. The national Guidelines were also a prerequisite for drafting the Transnational Brochure, which has been finished as a draft in June 2013 and communicated to the partners for feedback. The Transnational Brochure will include the conclusions from the Conference and the Final Paper.

3. Revision of the National workshops shows a big success in capacity building, awareness rising and spreading the idea of the project amongst the employers' representatives and workers' representatives. 72 participants were trained (instead of planned 60) in the three focus countries – Romania, Bulgaria, Romania, on the main themes: Legislative framework of I&C – European and national aspects, Collective Bargaining and Social dialogue, Change Management and Corporate Social Responsibility. The methodology applied during the workshops provoked the participants to discover the possibilities of I & C as one more way of exercising dialogue, to brainstorm for proactive trade union policy toward workers' rights and involvement. Special evaluation was given by the participants to the possibility for experience exchange between the countries in the axis old-new member states – candidate countries, which was possible also because of the methodology applied during the workshops. This project was highly appreciated by the Macedonian partners, where the process of implementation of I&C in the national legislation is on the start, so the project created space for education of the social partners there and also for legislative initiatives.
4. In order to achieve a deep assessment of the project process the partners were asked to fill in a Questionnaire for assessment of the work. This questionnaire should show the partnership, respectively the European Commission how the EU funded action has progressed and what was achieved in the funding period. The most important is that we are doing it for ourselves, to learn from our experiences and to improve future project planning and future common project actions. The analysis of the Questionnaires reaffirmed the satisfaction of the partnership from the work done.
5. Then the participants had the floor to share their impression and suggestions. The round table input covered all of them.

**Tatyana Mihaylova**, expert on Industrial relations in CITUB underlined, "...Despite the fact that the European Directive on I&C was transposed in the Bulgarian reality automatically in 2000, now the Trade unions in Bulgaria have an initiative for legislative amendments in the Labour code regarding the improvement of the Chapter on Information and Consultation, namely for provisions of free time for training and qualification for employees."

**Thomas Hentshel**, IGBAU stated that the project was good with serious results achieved. Nevertheless that in Germany they have 100-years history of social dialogue there is still place for improving the legislation which comes from the practice. The small farmers in Germany do not benefit from the possibilities of Information and consultation. There is need of finding instruments for developing education and qualification activities of employees and workers and also motivation development for agricultural work, and this should be seen in the new Common Agricultural Policy. The trade unions and employers in the sector have to search for and to create new ideas for common educational activities.

**Dushan Urban**, Slovakia, shared his concerns on the social dialogue in the new member states countries and the needed minimum social standards.

**Zhivko Danevski**, Agrosindikat, Macedonia shared his impressions regarding the Analytical Report. He underlined the positive impact of this project, which enabled the Agrosindikat to integrate the texts from the European Directive 2002/14 into the collective agreements in the Agriculture and Food processing industry in Macedonia, nevertheless that the Law on Work councils will come in force after Macedonia become a member state of the European Union. "...This is a great success for the employees in these sectors in Macedonia and for the trade unions as well. Moreover, the training of the workers' and unions' activists on the legislation of Information and Consultation and the procedures for employees involvement creates possibilities for active inclusion in the management process and provides the workers and employees with more security and shared responsibility." Mr. Danevski said, that the trade unions have to keep working actively with the seasonal workers and primary producers, who are still lacking their fundamental right to unionize.

**Ermano Bonaldo**, FAI-CISL, Italy, spoke about the relation between the industrial relations and the social dialogue in agriculture. He stressed, that the social dialogue should support also the workers who are excluded by the labour market and where the collective agreements are failed.

**Florin Istrate**, Agrostar, Romania, confirmed the shared awareness of both trade unions and employers of the right of information and consultation. The network development of regional/territorial centers for education and information toward agricultural workers and small and micro farmers will activate them to participate in the social life, to organize themselves and to become more capable in the market. The good practice of Agrostar in this field shows the positive results in this field.

**Antonio Carbone**, ALPA, Italy, gave his overview to the crisis in Europe today stressing on the place and role of the Agriculture with its socially responsible function. "...Today we need more integrity between the member states. The theme of Information and consultation in Agriculture enable us to look in the future and to seek political and cultural results in organizing the small farmers and to make them active for keeping the regions of Europe alive.

**Indrji Polivka**, ASO-OSPZV, Check Republic, congratulated the partnership for the results and the interesting theme explored. He spoke on the main challenges in his country– demographic imbalance and depopulation of the rural areas, decrease of the productivity and quality of the agricultural production, etc. - sharing the firm statement for more solidarity in our common goals and position for sustainable agriculture.

**Yordanka Dimitrova**, FNSZ, spoke about the social contribution of the agricultural cooperative (she represents) to the life in the region and the village where it is. She underlined that because of the social dialogue they develop since more than 20 years and the social program they run, the working places they create and hold, the support to the local community, to the school, cultural complex, church, etc., the region is alive and the people stay there. A lot of the investments of the cooperative are channeled to creation and development of new activities.

**Fabien Guimbretiere**, FGA-CFDT, France, shared the importance of the project theme for his organization in the aspect of developing social partnership and dialogue at territorial level. He stated that the legislation has to be developed in the light of giving more power to the workers and employees in these relations.

The discussion was enriched by debate on new initiatives amongst the partners. It was agreed that new actions by the social partners are needed in order to guarantee minimum information for the workers and employees in the sector regarding their social, pension, and health care rights and this information has to be applied to the seasonal workers as well. The specific social funds for education, qualification, retraining, are needed to be promoted in the sector as a result of bilateral agreements of the social partners.

Svetla Vasileva, Project Manager, made a summary of the discussion thanking to all of the partners for their commitment to the project work and to the guests for their interest shown and input given. She underlined the importance of the agreed common position from the yesterday – conference to make step forward in development of the legislation regarding the Information and consultation at European level, but more over in developing the social achievements for the workers and employees in agriculture in every single country. She shared his hope that this large forum is strong enough the voice of the people to be heard.

The partners agreed:

- The Common position to be presented to the European Commission and to the European Sectoral Social dialogue Committee meeting for Agriculture. It includes the political accents of the partnership and partners organizations, working in the EFFAT network.
- The Transnational Brochure to be published on 6 languages after including the results from the Conference and distributed amongst the partners

- The project to be reported to the Commission by the Management according to the rules.

The work day finished with the conclusion how important are the cooperation, solidarity and discussions amongst the partners to learn from each other to create a culture, knowledge and skills upon the process of information and consultation and social dialogue and common promise for future work.