



# RESTRUCTURING & **collective** **competences**

**A guide for  
trade union representatives**

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# RESTRUCTURING & COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES A PRACTICAL GUIDE

HOW CAN TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF LOSS  
OF COLLECTIVE KNOW-HOW DURING RESTRUCTURING?

## FOREWORD

*Well-qualified workers are recognised as key to European economic success. Their skills and competences must be properly valued and developed to respond to the challenges of a changing labour market and technological advances. As a result, these have been at the heart of the ETUC's activities particularly in the areas of training, restructuring, and industrial policy.*

*The general approach – the ETUC's included – has, however, been to focus on individual competences. The role of collective competences, and that of the work group in transferring knowledge, has not generally been a major trade union concern during restructuring processes. The ETUC and Syndex project 'Restructuring and Competences' seeks to put the issue of collective competences back on the trade union agenda when dealing with restructuring.*

*This guide is meant to generate discussion among trade unionists and, we hope, assist them in targeting their actions in this area. We also hope that it will be a useful addition to the 'toolbox' for their collective bargaining activities whether in the context of workers' training and qualifications in general, in the anticipation and management of change or when dealing with an actual restructuring process.*

*Syndex's expertise has been crucial to this project and in providing a different and challenging perspective to some basic trade union issues. The experts' case studies provide valuable insight into the issues at stake, the realities on the ground, the best and the not so good practices. The knowledge and experience of my ETUC colleagues on the Steering Committee has enabled us to make this complex issue more accessible. I am grateful for their valuable cooperation.*

*Józef Niemiec, ETUC Deputy General Secretary*

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## CONTEXT AND CHALLENGES

Restructuring has become a central management tool for companies.

From the trade union perspective, restructuring is first and foremost a risk in terms of employment. Despite some progress having been made, the issues of work, the actual conditions in which tasks are performed and the know-how involved, are given secondary importance.

While the issue of competences has gradually emerged as one of the main pillars of management of restructuring, it must be stated that, for the time being, this is confined to the consideration of individual skills. However, such an approach fails to take account of a fundamental dimension of all companies, which is that they are above all groups whose dynamics cannot merely be

defined as the sum of the trajectories of those involved.

Restructuring modifies the work group, at best by deconstructing and then rebuilding it, at worst by destroying it so it always produces side effects, which can be irreversible. Restructuring not only affects collective competences, it also quite simply affects the individuals' relationship with the work group and with the process of transferring and sharing individual skills. Periods of restructuring can, therefore, potentially bring about the destruction of all of these intangible resources that companies still struggle to identify.

This guide provides trade union representatives with a first tool for addressing the impacts of restructuring on collective competences, and will hopefully help to make work a central consideration during restructuring.

## WHAT QUESTIONS MUST BE ASKED?

Some very specific issues must be considered:

- What happens to individual and collective know-how following restructuring? How can such know-how be preserved?
  - If the work group is considered to have a role in the (re)construction and sharing of know-how, what is the impact of restructuring on this role?
  - Are the impacts and mechanisms the same for employees remaining in companies and those departing?
- Do all forms of restructuring have the same impacts? How can the most harmful forms of restructuring be identified and their impacts mitigated?

Answering these questions is essential for addressing the much broader and currently critical issue: how can the issues of employment and work be addressed in coordination during restructuring?

## WHY USE THIS GUIDE?

### 1. Explanations to aid understanding...

- Definitions
- Mechanisms
- Guidelines for analysing your particular situation



### 2. ...Tips to facilitate action

- Recommendations to help take discussions forward
- Practical help sheets
- Bargaining topics to help structure social dialogue

## DERIVED FROM A EUROPE-WIDE SURVEY

This guide is based on the results of the project '*Restructuring & Competences: how can the issues of work, employment and collective know-how be linked in the context of restructuring*', carried out in 2013 by experts from consulting firm Syndex and a network of partners. This project studied how the issues of employment, work and collective know-how could be addressed in coordination with one another. <http://www.etuc.org/r/477>

In addition to boosting visibility, this project aims to promote a better understanding of the issue of collective skills and work groups in the restructuring process. A literature review was conducted and supplemented by a review of experiences. Case studies were carried out in six countries and seven companies from various sectors (metal and aircraft manufacturing industries, as well as major companies in the telecommunications, banking and energy services sectors).

Group and individual interviews were performed involving approximately 70 people, including current or former employees and management or trade union representatives, who had all experienced major restructuring processes. Interviewees shared their experience, thoughts, proposals, and in many cases, their discomfort, with the study leaders. Their remarks provided the main source of material for the project report, as well as for this guide.



# EXPLANATIONS TO AID UNDERSTANDING



WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS OF RESTRUCTURING  
ON WORK GROUPS AND ON THE TRANSFER OF SKILLS?

# HOW DOES THE WORK GROUP PLAY A ROLE IN THE TRANSFER OF SKILLS?

## What is a work group?

Work groups consist of several workers working towards a common goal AND primarily revolve around a shared set of professional rules and compliance therewith. These rules differ from prescribed procedures in that they result from exposure to actual practices and are discussed and developed by the work group itself.

*The terms 'group work' and 'work group' should not be confused – the development of collective competence among work group members will not simply happen because group working structures have been set up. Rules for communication, coordination or collaboration between people may be prescribed or formalised, without automatically triggering cooperation and drive from the work group.*

## The work group – an essential mentor

The work group acts like a first-line mentor as it is a source of learning, reference and protection for each worker, making it possible to:

- teach members the ropes and tricks of the trade already developed by the group to overcome difficult aspects of a job,
- acquire know-how on professional risks and defensive strategies to cope with unpleasant working conditions,
- compare opinions and approaches in order to improve the working practices of all,
- ensure compliance with industry and professional rules,
- award recognition to quality of work and competences according to common professional criteria,
- regulate group activity through the distribution of workload or mutual support in coping with problems.

## What conditions are required for the group to develop collective competences?

In order for all members to develop their expertise and for the work group to be able to fulfil its irreplaceable role of trainer and vehicle for the development of collective com-

## EXAMPLES OF COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES

Collective competences may take various forms:

- technical or 'core business' competences: these are work methods shared by group members which are specific to their profession or job, e.g. the ability to produce a fault diagnostic for products according to shared criteria and methods;
- peripheral competences: these are external to the main task or activity, but regularly used by the work group, e.g. the quality culture, the development of precautionary approaches to avoid occupational hazards, mentoring abilities, etc.;
- cooperative competences: specific know-how which forms the basis of the cooperation between colleagues with a view to optimising work, e.g. information-sharing methods, assistance with the handling of errors or malfunctions, the ability to effectively distribute tasks according to workload, to innovate as a result of discussing the work or to produce feedback, etc.

Collective competences therefore primarily refer to informal methods of exchange, supported by group solidarity which contributes to the recognised capacity of the work group to repeatedly coordinate itself in order to achieve a common result or to mutually develop solutions.

petences, certain conditions must be in place (in terms of work organisation and the group's operating mode), so that cooperation may take priority over competition:

- Everyone should find benefit in the work group;
- An atmosphere of trust and a sense of security should be shared by group members, which implies fair conduct;
- The competences of all members should be identified

and recognised;

- There should be a framework and time for discussing professional matters;
- There should be some leeway in the performance of work (in particular, workforce and actual workload should be appropriately balanced);
- everyone should feel they have a stake in the group.

### COULD THE 'SURVIVOR SYNDROME' HAVE BEEN REPLACED BY A 'BENEFICIARY SYNDROME'?

There was no evidence in the case studies of 'the survivor syndrome' (consisting of guilt and in some cases post-traumatic symptoms experienced by employees remaining in a company following restructuring). The low proportion of redundancies compared to voluntary departures may be one explanation for this.

However, a new and no less worrying phenomenon was observed that may be called 'the beneficiary syndrome'. Under this syndrome, employees' weariness of continual restructuring, the extent of psycho-social risks and the deterioration of quality of life at work lead remaining employees to eventually envy those who were 'fortunate enough to be able to leave the company'. This trend is more marked when the conditions of departure are favourable. As for departing employees, they do not necessarily see themselves as victims of restructuring and sometimes experience guilt about leaving their colleagues to absorb their workload and manage without them.

# INDIVIDUAL & COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES: FUNDAMENTAL ASPECTS OF A COMPANY'S ADDED VALUE

## **What are collective competences?**

Collective competences consist of the various know-how developed within the work group, as a result of actually doing a job. They are therefore unique to the group since they are the product of cooperation between work group members and the comparison of working methods.

## **How are individual and collective competences linked to one another?**

Competences are considered to be collective when they cannot be developed and exercised by a single individual.

They are the result of interaction and synergy, on the one hand, between individual competences and, on the other, with the work group's collective memory or history.

## **What do collective competences bring to companies?**

When a work group is dynamic, its collective competences represent more than just the sum of the competences of its members and lead to greater performance. Collective competence thus refers to the specific combinations which make a site or a business unique in relation to others. This type of competence therefore contributes to the added value of the business (for example, the capacity of a business to position itself within a competitive environment may be assessed on the basis of collective competences and criteria such as the scarcity of the competences in place).

Collective competences also generate performance, quality and safe working conditions and form the basis of a business' overall strategic competence.

## HOW DOES RESTRUCTURING ALTER CONDITIONS FOR THE TRANSFER OF COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES?

Restructuring leads to instability in employment and organisational changes, which means it is likely to cause a deterioration in the operating conditions of work groups.

Several factors emerged from the case studies as having a significant impact on these conditions and, by extension, on the role which the work group plays in the transfer of know-how:

- **the increase in workload and the absorption of new tasks:** this 'densification' of work is a direct consequence of restructuring and mobilises a large part of an individual's resources. The individual's ability to find time to ensure the transfer of know-how becomes very limited;
- **forced versatility:** the restructuring process may involve a wide range of reorganisations and changes, such as changes to position or status and to job specification or task content. Such changes can result in competences which individuals have acquired, and for which they are recognised, being undermined. As they are forced in effect, to be versatile, some em-

ployees have to integrate skills that are 'distant' from their area of specialisation and/or expertise and end up with the impression of being spread too thinly across a host of tasks and of producing poor quality work. Caught up in an endless spiral of unlearning (or even poor performance), employees can become reluctant to take part in the process of transferring know-how which they no longer have the impression of really mastering;

- **the spiral of unlearning and decline in levels of collective competence:** in certain instances, specific skills which were possessed by only the most senior employees (who have left under the restructuring plan) are no longer available despite their still being a need for them. This can lead remaining employees to doubt the work group's competence, legitimacy, and ability to rebuild the skill which has been lost. Some aspects of work are thus completely or partially abandoned or achieved by 'cobbling together' solutions, causing know-how to eventually become extinct. In the event of a downturn in industry performance, this

spiral effect may become pronounced to the point of destroying the worker's feeling of competence. This usually leads to a loss of motivation when it comes to the sharing of know-how and skills;

- **destabilisation of the work group's balance:** job cuts and/or reorganisations alter the composition of the work group and its internal equilibrium. The group's bearings, identity and dynamic must be reinvented. If departures exceed a certain level and/or involve the 'backbone' of the group, this reconstruction is made very difficult, causing the group to remain destabilised. Ultimately, this may result in disruption to the

process of integrating new employees and greater difficulty in transferring existing work-group skills;

- **the emergence of interpersonal tensions:** such tensions impede cooperation with both colleagues and line managers, as well as limiting discussions between workers on working methods and professional matters. In some cases, they may even lead to a deterioration in the working atmosphere, a loss of trust within the work group, conflicts, and so on. Ultimately, such tensions prevent collective know-how from circulating properly.

## WHAT SYNDROMES DOES RESTRUCTURING TRIGGER AMONG EMPLOYEES?

Restructuring therefore has an effect on both those leaving and those remaining in an organisation.

Among remaining employees, it triggers defence strategies on the part of employees (both at group and individual level), which ultimately undermine the know-how transfer role of the work group.

- **The withdrawal of the work group into itself:** a group that has been destabilised, or which feels threatened by restructuring may, as a reaction, strengthen its internal cohesion to protect what remains, to cope with difficulties, to express its disagreement, etc. Such withdrawal may be reflected in the refusal to integrate in a new group, or to integrate new arrivals, with all the attendant consequences in terms of know-how transfer.
- **The longing for the past («passé-ism»):** in such cases, employees are overcome by a certain nostalgia for the company or the group as it used to operate before. This focus on how things were 'before' makes

it difficult for them to envisage their profession in the future and thus impedes its transmission to others.

- **The 'cart syndrome':** all restructuring plans generate, or accentuate, a feeling of insecurity about future employment. Sometimes this insecurity provides an incentive for individuals to intentionally keep specific expertise to themselves in order to maintain an edge over others in the prospect of further restructuring.
- **The 'Kleenex syndrome':** in such cases, the withdrawal strategy is related to a deteriorated sense of recognition. After having shown commitment to one's work, having developed competences and accumulated experience, the experience of restructuring can cause a feeling of discredit or disavowal of all of these past efforts. Employees may even feel betrayed by the company, leading them to question their involvement at work and employ withdrawal strategies to protect their self-esteem. The feeling of necessity for the transmission of know-how, to ensure its continuity, is thus destroyed.



## WHAT FACTORS HAVE THE GREATEST IMPACT?

Certain factors, more than others, amplify the impacts of restructuring on the role of the work group in the transfer of know-how. A dozen factors emerged as having a major influence (see table on p.18). Several of these are examined here in detail.

### Type of restructuring plan

Not all forms of restructuring have the same impacts. Their effects differ according to:

- **The restructuring rationale:** when the market model prevails (i.e. the short-term and opportunistic management of employment based on immediate market trends and profitability targets), restructuring has a greater impact. In such cases, which are extremely frequent, there is increased pressure in terms of workload and forced versatility. This increases the likelihood of a spiral of loss of competences being triggered. This rationale, which brings employees directly up against the solely financial rationality of management, creates a feeling of injustice and encourages employee withdrawal strategies. With the impression that their skills count for so little in relation to profitability, employees lack motivation when it comes to ensuring the transmission of their know-how.
- **the restructuring aim:** when restructuring involves heavy workforce reductions, employees withdraw from skills transfer primarily due to the lack of time and resources available for such activities. In some cases, restructuring also brings departmental reorganisations and changes in management procedures, thus affecting the very nature of the work group – the individualisation of performance and remuneration, the standardising of working methods and the strengthening of procedures are a few examples. The effects of such changes can be devastating for the work group (competition may replace

Although restructuring models that label themselves as socially responsible can result in massive redundancies, they generate less violent reactions, as they at least have the merit of proposing a much higher level of support, particularly on the issue of skills;

## LIST OF MAIN FACTORS

This should not be taken as an exhaustive list, but rather as an overview of the prominent factors which emerged from the case studies.

|  |  |
|--|--|
| Timing                                 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time and period allowed for the transfer of skills</li> <li>• Phasing of departures</li> <li>• Inclusion of a post-restructuring transition period</li> </ul>   |
| Type of position affected              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantity and distribution of job cuts among departments</li> <li>• Nature of professions and skills concerned</li> </ul>  |
| Pre-existing arrangements and measures | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Existence of an official and operational mentoring system</li> <li>• Access to appropriate training</li> <li>• Voluntary departures</li> <li>• Maintaining of social benefits linked to the former position</li> </ul>        |
| Management models                      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predominant management model behind restructuring</li> <li>• Reshaping of management modes and concurrent processes</li> <li>• Management attitudes on restructuring</li> </ul>   |
| Type of work group                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Culture, status and structure of initial work group</li> </ul>  |
| Target population for skills transfer  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Status (company employees, temporary workers, subcontractors, employees of relocated sites)</li> </ul>  |
| Social dialogue                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance given to restructuring during bargaining</li> <li>• Level of awareness of various stakeholders</li> </ul>  |
| Type of restructuring plan             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationale (financial/operational)</li> <li>• Aim (workforce reduction, redesign of processes, modernisation)</li> <li>• Nature (relocation, externalisation, closure, merger/acquisition, internal reorganisation)</li> </ul> |

cooperation), and on the perceived quality of work, thus impeding the know-how transfer process;

- **nature of restructuring:** while the difficulties of transferring and maintaining collective competences are essentially linked to workload increases in the case of strictly internal restructuring, other forms of restructuring plan have additional impacts. Relocations, externalisations and mergers tend to generate tensions between work groups (internal v external, groups of differing statuses, etc), conflicts over work criteria and methods and the withdrawal of initial work groups into themselves. The immediate result is reluctance (or even refusal) to transfer know-how to those who did not belong to the original work group.

### **The level of voluntary departure**

When departures are voluntary, there is less resentment from those leaving and they are more willing to transfer their know-how. Nevertheless, the principle of voluntary departure plans can indirectly result in the departure of senior employees (who are often the most experienced). This aggravates the risk of a loss of

skills if massive voluntary departure is planned.

### **The time available and the restructuring stages (before/during/after)**

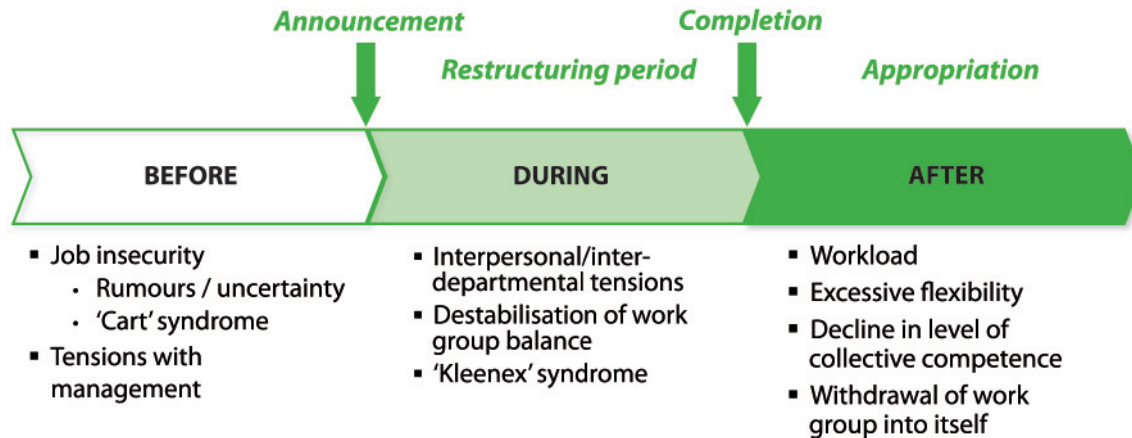
If a realistic timeframe is allocated to ensure know-how transfer between those leaving the company and those remaining in the company, and if departures have been staggered, the loss of collective competences is reduced.

The more the jobs draw on implicit skills (sense of touch, visual appreciation, intuition), the more difficult it will be and the longer it will take to successfully transfer skills. And yet, paradoxically, when skills are less formalised, they are considered as being less critical or less difficult and thus less time and conditions are allocated for their transmission.

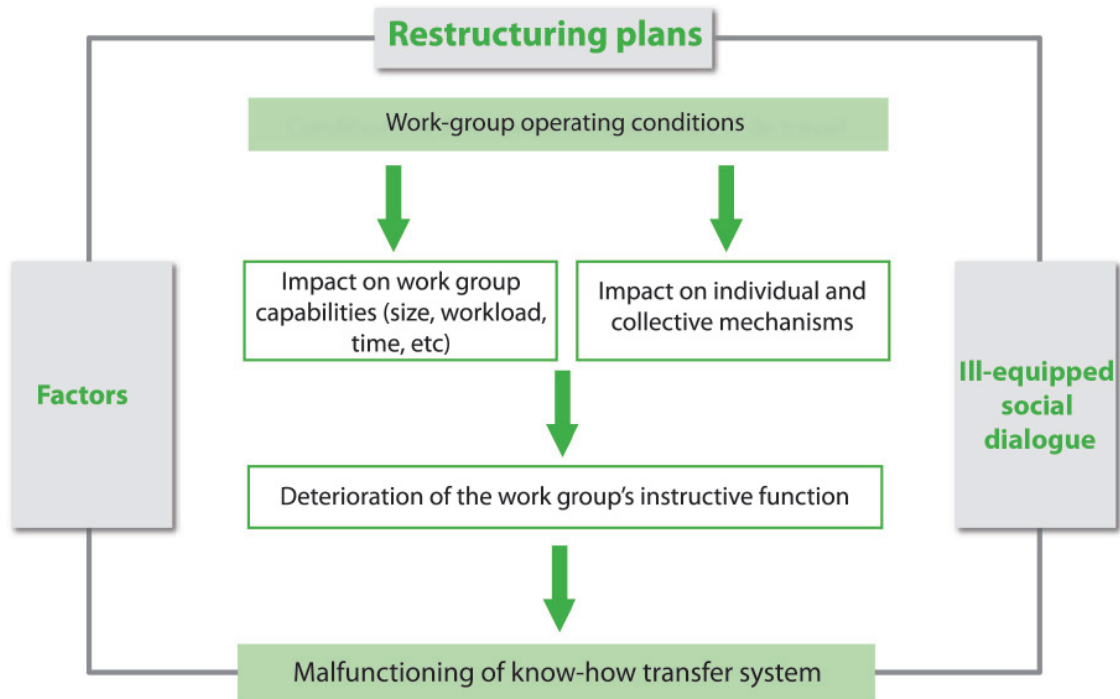
Impacts do not necessarily become apparent in the post-restructuring phase – some begin to set in even before the official announcement, while others are at their peak during the negotiation process and some other ones may even occur much later.

Moreover, successive restructuring tends to blur 'before', 'during' and 'after' sequences and thus produce cumulative or simultaneous effects which can become self-rein-

forcing. More generally, what aggravates the effects is the absence of a post-restructuring transition period.



# OVERVIEW



## THE ESSENTIAL ROLE OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE

Even when concerns are voiced regarding the future of competences following restructuring, the matter generally retains the status of 'potential problem' and is not reflected in concrete terms in bargaining. The concepts of collective competences and work groups do not appear in the frameworks of trade union and management representatives and, as a result, dealings on topics in these areas are limited. Why is it such a struggle to tackle such concepts under social dialogue?

- The complexity of employees' actual know-how is often underestimated by management and underestimated problems lead to inadequate solutions.
- The role of the work-group in the transfer of know-

how, which is neither very visible nor well recognised, is generally minimised.

- There is a tendency for bargaining to focus on social aspects and on support for departing employees.
- Social partners lack concrete and effective measures to support their negotiations, i.e. general absence of qualitative anticipation tools, no cyclical tools (for mobilisation during restructuring); shortcomings in policies and/or tools for managing the acknowledgement of work and the recognition of skills and experience. The few tools that are sometimes used, such as mentoring, continue to focus on the individual dimension and do not take collective skills into account.

# ... TIPS TO FACILITATE ACTION



WHAT ARE THE RECOMMENDATIONS AND WHAT TOOLS EXIST TO PROTECT COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES DURING RESTRUCTURING?

## GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

The absence of references on the issue of collective competences makes awareness the first challenge. Demonstrating the impacts of restructuring is a first step to enable the issue to become a more central focus of social dialogue.

Timing could also be considered as a specific issue in restructuring, so as to attach greater importance to forward-planning in social dialogue. It would be completely naive to assume that it is possible to integrate the issue of collective competencies in a reorganisation carried out within a few weeks and in a company without any customary consideration of this dimension.

There is an urgent need to ‘rehabilitate’ the work group, as a key player in financial performance, strategic competence, and organisational effectiveness. In particular, this implies changing the current concept of employability, performance, and skill – a concept which is increasingly individualised.

The tools presented in the following section of this guide have been designed to help address these challenges; employing them when making new bargaining demands could help to make a qualitative leap forwards. It should be noted that these tools have been tested and that positive effects have been shown.



# HELP SHEET NO1

## PLANNING AHEAD TO AVOID CLOSURES : THE SITE CV

The site CV is based on an analysis of the collective strengths of a production site with a view to identifying ideas for potential development and generating opportunities for new areas of business. This document is the business' equivalent of an individual's curriculum vitae and skills assessment. It should be used as a strategic planning tool, in advance of restructuring, and for promoting the site to the various stakeholders (corporate management, public authorities, investors, new ownership, etc). The site CV uses an original approach focusing on the promotion of work group skills and the commitment of social partners to the protection of employment, and is designed to support site conversion strategies.

### **The process**

A site CV is primarily comprised of two complementary analytical sections.

*1. An anticipatory economic, technological and financial analysis of the site.*

- This analysis helps to assess the growth prospects of the site, the viability of the current development strategy (products, markets, distribution channel, technology, etc.), but also and especially to highlight development opportunities that could result from a change in strategy and which may even lead to positioning the site in a new production sector.
- This economic forecasting is based on macroeconomic, sector-based and technological analysis and scenarios.

*2. An assessment of collective competences and their level of recognition*

Based on the collective know-how identified and analysed through this assessment, possibilities for the redeployment of the production site will take shape. What skills does the work group possess? What is the nature of these skills? In which sectors are these competences

sought after or to which are they transferable? What competences are lacking in order to start up a new type of production? What skills acquisition measures must be implemented to take up the challenge? Collective competences, whether technical, organisational or relational, or core business or peripheral skills, are becoming one of the key elements of a site's attractiveness, beyond its mere immediate profitability.

### **Methodology**

The approach revolves around a joint work group including management, (local, national and international), employee representatives, and one or more experts. As both the driver of and a player in the project, the group meets regularly, organises the concrete implementation of the process, compares analysis, and identifies and develops potential paths of action. Discussions are based on the principle of a shared diagnostic. The work group is responsible for the proposals made to decision makers.

The economic analysis is based on a review of the documentation and interviews with management. Group interviews with employees, led by experts, form the

basis for the analysis of collective competences and are supplemented by observations. Interviews are focused on actual rather than prescribed work and know-how. Special attention is given to interactions within the work group.

### **The result of the process – a 'promotional' CV**

Acting as a veritable business card, the CV presents the site's strengths and collective competences and can be used in many ways. Internally, within the business or group, the CV can be used to generate discussion on aspects other than that of the observable profitability. Externally, it can help to attract the attention of a potential investor (initial contact), or to promote the site at local level to public authorities, the press, and so on.

### **Requirements**

Given the unifying and constructive potential of a site CV, the process of developing one is as important as the outcome. The sine qua non condition is therefore the stakeholders' commitment to a site and job preservation strategy. The process requires a good deal of flexibility on the

part of social partners, with regard to both the discussion method and the choices to be made.

Transparency, full access to information, and therefore trust, are also key to the project's success.

Finally, considering the significant work involved in producing a site CV, this can only be done where restructuring is planned in advance.

## HELP SHEET NO2

### IDENTIFYING COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES TO PRESERVE THEM: MAPPING COLLECTIVE COMPETENCES

Mapping collective competences highlights and categorises the know-how possessed by the work groups of a business. The aim is to:

- obtain a clear and accurate picture of actual and acquired collective competences,
- anticipate needs in terms of skills development and know-how transfer in order to prevent loss of competence (and to thus promote intangible investments),
- assess the coherence between the strategic plan, the job management policy and the real situation with regard to the site's competences.

This kind of mapping provides a diagnostic, as well as possible future scenarios. An action plan including focus points, methods, resources, a schedule, and so on, is es-

tablished based on of the items identified as requiring vigilance. The map is discussed by social partners and becomes the basis for bargaining.

Maps are produced on an ad-hoc basis, well in advance of restructuring, and must be updated and re-discussed following all major staff changes (of both a qualitative and quantitative nature), and as soon as the company's age profile becomes dominated by senior workers and therefore unbalanced.

# HELP SHEET NO3

## INVOLVING EVERYONE IN DEVELOPING COMPETENCES FOR ALL COLLECTIVE MENTORING

In addition to individual mentoring (where it exists), this type of mentoring helps to:

- rehabilitate and promote the instructive role played by the work group,
- make the learning experience richer and more diversified for the person to be trained,
- ensure the constant availability of a pool of mentors,
- acknowledge the acquired competences of more experienced employees.

For the system to work – while still leaving room for the workgroup to organise itself – it must be formalised and provided with real means of implementation, i.e. precise

and pre-defined objectives, allotted time and conditions, training on mentoring methods.

In concrete terms, the work group becomes a source of advice and a resource. It identifies work situations that have a learning value and organises briefing/de-briefing sessions. New arrivals rotate positions. A mentoring group may be set up in order to structure know-how transfer. Such mentoring may be used during periods of recruitment, reorganisation (redeployment or transfer of staff), or in advance of departures involving more experienced staff.

## WHAT SHOULD BE NEGOTIATED WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF RESTRUCTURING? A FEW IDEAS

This new approach to restructuring also provides tremendous grounds for collective bargaining which has been undermined by the increasing individualisation of work. This presents both a challenge and an opportunity for trade union organisations.

New bargaining issues might arise during restructuring (some examples of avenues for further reflection):

- Measures to ease the implementation of individual targets during the restructuring phases, with a view to enabling the work group to re-establish and rebuild a relationship of trust.
- Agreements on how the transfer of know-how will be organised during the restructuring period. This could be based, for instance, on reinforced mentoring with training for reallocated workers, organisation of working time to accommodate production and mentoring, mentoring training for those selected as mentors, etc.
- Measures to phase departures. These must be adapted to the time needed to learn and take ownership of the skills relating to the abolished/vacant position (based on workload assessments involving employees).

# CHECKLIST

Incorporating collective competences into trade union action with a view to anticipating and managing restructuring – what questions should be asked?

## 1. General questions to be asked

- Do the work groups perform well?
- What information is required and what information is available to evaluate the situation in terms of competences?
- What measures are in place, or proposed, to ensure the transfer of competences (type of mentoring, training for new positions in the context of internal transfers, etc.) ? What means and resources are there to support them?
- What are the current positions of trade union organisations on the subject of collective competences?
- Are board members and managers aware of the issue of collective competences and of the need to transfer know-how?
- What is the age structure and distribution of senior staff in each job category?

## 2. What is the current state of affairs in terms of collective competences?

- Have the competences at risk been identified? If yes, how and, who was involved in the process?
- How are job cuts distributed between the various professional categories, departments and areas of expertise?
- Which competences (individual and collective) are potentially at risk of being lost?
- Are the work group's competences transferable? If yes, to what type of activity or business?

## 3. What room for manoeuvre is there in terms of negotiation in restructuring situations?

- What measures are proposed to preserve the skills of the business?
- Will departures be phased? If yes, according to what timeframe and criteria?
- What external resources, specialised and capable of being mobilised, are needed to produce a diagnos-

tic, to identify risks (i.e. an expert) and support the transfer of know-how where necessary (training or skills assessment organisation, specialist consultants, public services, etc.)?

- Are there any best practices within the company or group on which to build?



## REFERENCES & RESOURCES

There has been increasing consideration given at European level to restructuring issues and the responsible handling of restructuring plans..

The **European Commission** published:

- a Green Paper *'Restructuring and anticipation of change: what lessons from recent experience?'* (2012) <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=699&consultId=9&furtherConsult=yes>.
- a communication on *New Skills for New Jobs. Anticipating and matching labour market and skills needs* <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=COM:2008:0868:FIN:EN:HTML>

The **European Parliament** report *'Information and consultation of workers, anticipation and management of restructuring'* (also known as the Cercas report) underlines the need to *'put human resources at the heart of companies'*

*strategic development'*, to *'continually develop the skills and competences of their workers, increasing their employability and their internal and external mobility'*, to *'develop mechanisms for anticipation and for forward planning of employment and skills needs'* and to *'recognise the right for every worker to benefit from appropriate training'*.

The resolutions and positions of **ETUC** on the topic are available for consultation at [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org), as is the report upon which this guide is based, <http://www.etuc.org/r/477>.

Several resources on the topic are available on the **Syndex** website at <http://www.syndex.eu/syndex> and <http://www.syndex.fr/Europe-International>. For information on site CVs in particular, go to: <http://www.syndex.fr/eZ-Publish/actualites-Home/CVdesite>.







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