

Minutes NewChallenges+

Workshop in Berlin, Germany

Tuesday, 06.09.2022

Participants: see list of participants

1. Opening

Mrs. Bettina Wilhelm (zbb) welcomes the participants from the zbb.

Mr. Margaritis (OBES) also welcomes the participants and gives the floor to Mrs. Spiliotopoulou.

A round of introductions is held.

2. Presentation of the Project results

Ms. Spiliotopoulou presents (see Annex 1 - Introduction Berlin):

- Objectives and framework conditions
- The participating organizations
- The results:
 - o Preparatory meeting in Greece, Athens - December 2021 - Done.
 - o Webinar in Greek - ToDo
 - o Transnational meeting in Italy, Rome - June 2022 - Done
 - o Webinar in Italian - ToDo
 - o Biliterates Meeting in Spain, Madrid - June 2022
 - o Webinar in Spanish - ToDo
 - o Workshop in Germany, Berlin - September 2022
 - o Webinar in German - ToDo
 - o Website is ready: [www. newchallengesplus.obes.gr](http://www.newchallengesplus.obes.gr)
 - o Guide for trade unions in GR, IT, ES, DE, EN
 - o Transnational meeting in Greece, Athens - 4/5 November 2022.

3. Presentation from the workers' point of view in Germany

Mr. Dacke presents the trade union ver.di and talks about the impact of the covid pandemic on the work of ver.di S. Presentation ver.di in attachment):

- Traditionally offline work: contacting members, strikes, etc.
- Employees need to be equipped and trained for the changeover.
- Many legal issues to be clarified (data protection, occupational safety, works councils, etc.)
- Challenge for now: comprehensive evaluation of the conversions and their transformation into sustainable solutions

- Advantages: leap into digitalization, cost savings
- Disadvantages: the lack of interpersonal (or community) feeling during strikes
- Summary:
 - o large masses vs. individual consultations
 - o Works council work is hard because people feel less comfortable with a screen than with a person

Questions/comments from the floor:

- Are there legal consequences for workers in Germany for when important documents go public?
 - o If it was done accidentally/not intentionally, it is considered a data breach, the employee usually does not face any consequences
 - o If it is done intentionally, then yes.
- In Greece, there are companies that decide internally what the employer has to ensure from a digitalization perspective. What are employees in Germany entitled to in this regard?
 - o Separation: company - tariff; works council has contact with union and regulates this within the company.
- Digitization does not affect the service sector/goods production. Production is hindered by digitalization and not promoted much.
 - o There are "non-typical" industries for digitalization. Ver.di is trying to identify where support can be given in these industries.
 - o The goal is not to replace people. People decide and weigh what the machine should do.

4. Presentation from the employer's point of view in Germany

Ms. Brunsch presents the employer perspective using the example of zbb (see presentation).

Questions/comments from the floor:

- With regard to the difficult networking during the COVID pandemic, at some large events there were specially scheduled days for online parties, where participants could exchange ideas in smaller virtual groups and even play social games.
 - o Something like this can be implemented, of course, but it requires special planning. It is difficult to reach potential customers. In certain industries, where a lot of work is done on the computer, it is more feasible. In others, such as retail, there are many barriers such as lack of digital skills.
- Another example of digital togetherness was at AIDEC. At the end of each week, there was a weekly review meeting. It also included psychological counseling and face-to-face exchanges. For Christmas, there was a virtual Christmas tree that everyone decorated with a digital Christmas ornament.
- Are there any reimbursements for workstation equipment at home in Germany?
 - o According to the Occupational Health and Safety Ordinance, employers are required to provide software and hardware to equip employees.
 - o There are differences between public service and private business. Private sector companies do not receive reimbursement for these costs from the government.
- A telecom company in Greece provides one to its employees who do not have a high-speed Internet connection.

- In Greece, the employee's costs are not reimbursed. But there is a subsidy 1€ per working day in the home office.
- Is/may the employee be monitored in Germany, e.g. if he keeps his working hours in the home office?
 - o As a rule, there is no monitoring. Only if there is a special reason, the employer is allowed to do so (e.g. in case of previous incidents).
- Does the employee have to be available after the end of the shift/holiday?
 - o The employee is not obliged to do so unless otherwise agreed in the employment contract.

5. Presentation from the employee's point of view in Greece

Mr. Ninos reports on the impact of the COVID pandemic from the perspective of workers in Greece (see presentation):

- The impact has affected both public and private sector.
- Partly also negative impact on employees up to dismissals in the private sector
- In addition, internal relocations and lack of services
- More difficult to participate in trade union activities
- Telework at larger companies was better organized and prepared, often prior to the pandemic
- Telework brings a new work culture.

Changes:

- Necessary changes were determined by the state as well as employers and company management
- No changes were made that could have negative consequences for workers
- Application of telework:
 - Nowadays, telework is not continued because of the pandemic, but in the interest of the employer
 - There are cases of wrong interpretation of telework by social partners and workers
 - Uncertainty of the employee regarding the hours worked and the evaluation of the work, which often led to the increase of the actual hours worked
 - However, the experienced companies are able to deal with this
 - Reconciliation of family and work: in some European countries, working hours have been adjusted for child care
 - In the industries that are more suitable for telecommuting, employees usually have 2 days of home office available.

Problems:

- Lack of organization, work tools, knowledge and experience, support from employers.

Persistent problems:

- Distancing from the office and work colleagues as well as superiors.
- Exchange among colleagues on general topics and on the company itself
- Spatial/domestic conditions and the costs of teleworking

Achievements (successes) of unions:

- Listing the shortcomings of educational projects
- Daily compensation for telework costs established by law
- 1-2 days of presence in the office
- Employers are required to allow telework if employees have health problems
- Consultations and negotiations of employers with unions to improve working conditions.

6. Presentation from the employers' point of view in Greece

Mr. Bileros reports on the impact of COVID on SMEs and presents some statistical data from Greece in comparison to the EU (see presentation):

- Home office is considered as a remedy against the threat of insolvencies.
- New technological solutions to face the new challenges: e.g. Click Away.

Government prerequisites/initiatives:

- Fast Internet has been promised but not yet finally implemented
- Digital state, bureaucratic services have been introduced
- Support for SMEs with digitalization

Goal: Improve everyday life of employees and customers by integrating technologies.

- Urgent need for employee competencies:
 - o Competencies of information and data search/analysis.
 - o Communication and collaboration skills
 - o Competences of digital content creation
 - o Competencies of security and
 - o Problem solving.

7. Group Discussion

Those present will be divided into two groups to work on the discussion questions (see appendix).

Afterwards, the results will be presented in the plenary session