

Results of the Greek working group in Rome

Q1: Information and consultation, in relation to Covid-19, needs for reorganisation and digitalisation of processes (organisation of meetings, elections, representativeness, confidentiality etc).

- Information of employees about changes in legislation: There is no automated system of informing employees on these changes. The General Workers' confederation has a service dedicated in following up changes in legislation through which it can inform on a case-by-case basis, trade unions and employees upon their request. The frequency with which unions receive information hasn't changed.
- Consultation in most companies is done through teleconference. Yet, there are companies in which consultation takes place in person but less frequently.
In general though, both the frequency and quality have dropped.

Videoconferencing was a solution of necessity that allowed to a certain extent consultation to take place. It has by no means replaced it.

- How was the contact between unions and employees handled during the pandemic?

In the industrial companies, especially concerning employees working in the production process face-to-face meetings continued. In the cases of companies, where teleworking has been extensively used, trade unions communicated with employees via emails, Viber messages, social media, web posts, press releases. In some businesses which operate locally, communication was done even by using local channels.

A positive element of consultation taking place through videoconferencing that has been noted is that it gives the possibility to be recorder, which is very important as it does not allow misinterpretations of what been said.

- Ways of organising elections. Elections during the epidemic period were postponed several times but in the majority of cases they took place in person not online. In one case where employees worked in installations of the company all over Greece, elections were done online, with a participation of 100% of trade union members. Trade unions' position is that online elections should be a choice of the trade union, not mandatory.

Q2: Response of employees and trade unions to the new landscape of information and consultation

- From your two years of experience during the pandemic, what were the biggest difficulties you faced and your biggest take-aways, as workers and as unions?

During the pandemic, trade unions and employees faced many problems, such as suspension of business operations, due to reduction in production cycle, even reduction in exports due to the war.

- Especially, in terms of security measures during the epidemic businesses had to take additional measures and employees had to face problems they encountered for the first time. Such problems were:

Separation of employees into vaccinated and non-vaccinated. This problem was addressed through discussions in person.

Internally the unions had to manage their members and also communicate with the company. What they achieved by suggesting solutions was changing working hours, shifts not meeting at shift change, extending the formal quarantine duration, adding more commuting buses to avoid overcrowding. These measures were deemed positive by the union representatives. From now on, agreements with companies are required in order for Covid tests be made available for all employees (regardless if they are vaccinated or not) as till now vaccinated employees were not obliged to undergo tests on a regular basis and non-vaccinated one in most companies were obliged twice a week, yet they had to pay themselves for the tests.

As a conclusion, consultation (either online or physical) may be characterized as effective and efficient only if it results in negotiation and agreement.