

INNOTrans - European Networking for the transfer of information and innovation in SME sectors based on the example of the wood and furniture industry

Final Report

Overview of the project implementation

for the time

from November 1st, 2007 – January 31st, 2009

Reference Number of the Agreement:

VS/2007/0358



Filca
C I S L
FILCA - FEDERAZIONE
ITALIANA LAVORATORI
COSTRUZIONI E AFFINI



1. Background of the Project

The European wood and furniture industry is in the middle of a fundamental structural change which has especially pushed smaller and medium enterprises (SME) from the market and destroyed thousands of jobs since the 1990s. The ongoing internationalisation of production sites and markets exacerbates the global competition in the sector. European networking activities and sector-political cooperation is therefore necessary to secure competitive jobs and good labour standards.

Based on this point of view, trade unions from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Romania have initialised the European sector network wood / furniture and developed a continuous cooperation on this base.

The cooperation in the sector network allowed us to achieve several objectives:

- To initialise structured exchange of information about developments in the sector, different national standards for labour and social issues and difference in interest representation, collective wage agreements etc.;
- To improve the sector-political general knowledge through national sector reports;
- To implement information and educative events where we could exchange about national as well as European challenges;
- To initialise a sector-political and cross-company exchange of information with shop stewards and union workplace representatives about standards and innovation potentials;
- To identify and compare national differences of working conditions and to develop common aims and fields of activities for our concept of "Good Work".
- To develop a continuous exchange of information and mutually useable resources on the base of a bilingual (German/English) homepage;
- To create a common platform for ideas and proposals for future activities.

INNOTrans supports the development of European networks and supports the actors of trade unions and in companies in the sector with practical and strategic exchange to develop mutual aims and interests and to further a solidary cooperation.

INNOTrans is an employee-oriented information and communication platform which allows employees to exchange about sector-political issues, to cooperate on a transnational level and to actively participate in changing processes in their companies as well as the sector as a whole.

INNOTrans supports the European perspective of sector-political, trade-union or company-based interest representation of employees in the wood and furniture sector.

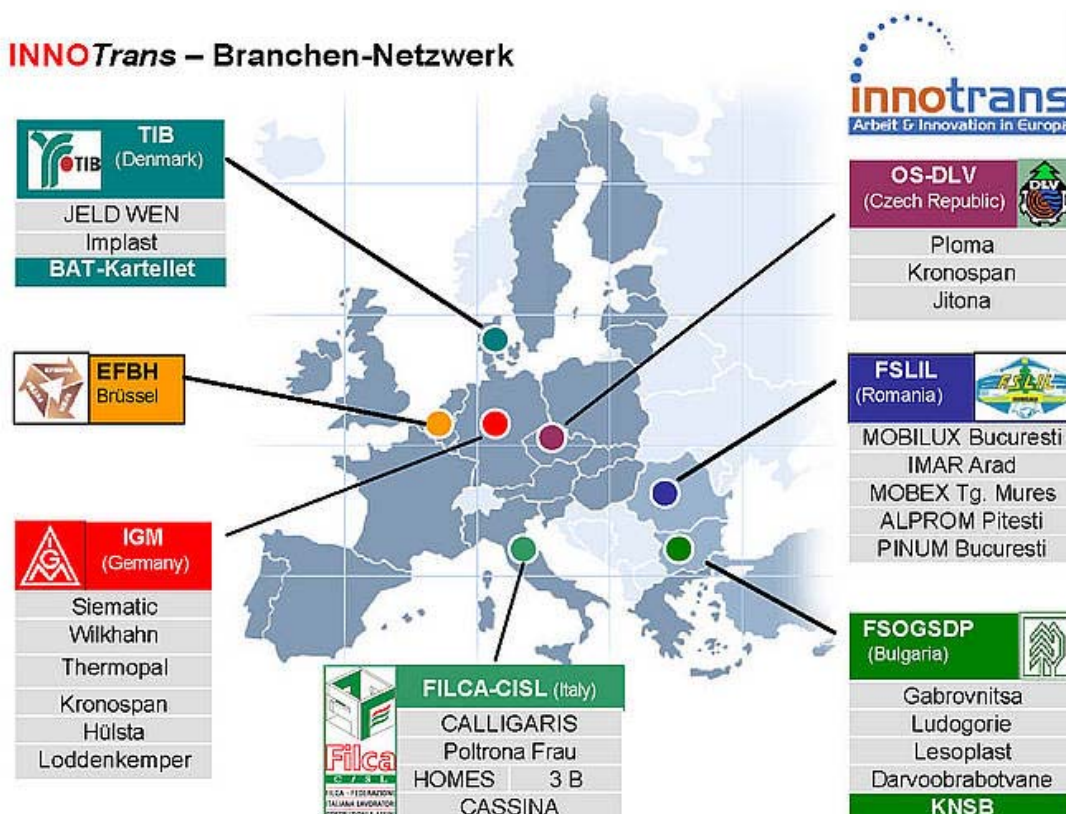
2. Project Partners

The European sector network wood / furniture is based on the active participation of national sector trade unions from six countries and the umbrella organisation on a national level. The partner organisations are:

- F SOGSDP** Federation of the trade unions in forestry and wood industry (Bulgaria)
- OS DLV** Gewerkschaft der Holz-, Forst- und Wasser- Industriearbeiter in der Tschechischen Republik
- TIB** United trade union for wood, industrial and construction in Denmark,
- IGM** industrial trade union metal (Germany)
- FILCA-CISL** Italian Trade Union of workers in construction and related vocations
- FSLIL** Federation of the free Trade Unions of the wood industry of Romania
- EFBH** European Federation of the construction and wood workers

Sector politically, these trade unions represent the employees in forestry, wood, furniture and construction industry. Based on this basic partnership, additional company-based employee representatives from 25 enterprises in total were included in the information and education measures. In total, 109 actors participated in the events of the sector network wood / furniture.

The following trade unions and enterprises (here: shop stewards and company-based interest representation) participated in the project implementation:



3. Implementation of the Project (Overview)

The following overview contains the comprehensive summary of the main project activities from November 1st 2007 to October 31st, 2009:

Project Phase and Activity		Place	Date
Preparation Phase			
Project preparation and initial meeting of the project partners	Germany/ European Partners		November 2007 – January 2008
Fine planning of aims, contents, procedures and tasks for the development of national sector reports			
Survey of criteria for national sector profiles			
Conceptualisation of the Project's website			
Kick off meeting of the project partners (transnational coordination group)	Frankfurt a.M. (Germany)		November 25th – 26th, 2007
Implementation Phase			
Survey of the sector situation (information, sector statistics, reports)	Germany/ European Partners		February 2008 – September 2008
Development of the sector reports wood / furniture in BG, CZ, DE, DK, IT, RO			
Information measures (in the network, on national and company level)			
Strength-Weakness analyses – Standards of "Good Work"			
Implementation of the project website			
Second network meeting (transnational coordination group)	Bucharest. (Romania)		March 16th – 17th, 2008
European Workshop (trade unions and company-based employee representatives)	Rome (Italy)		May 18th – 19th, 2008
Conclusion Phase / Follow-up			
Exchange of information and practices (continuation)	Germany/ European Partners		October 2008 – January 2009
Third network meeting (transnational coordination group)	Copenhagen (Denmark)		August 17th – 18th, 2008
European Final Conference	Hanover (Germany)		October 5 th – 6 th , 2008
Documentation und result validation (Final Conference and European sector monitor wood / furniture)	Germany/ European Partners		October 2008 – January 2009

4. Activities and Results

The framework of INNOTrans allowed to organise an improvement of the sector-political formation of information and the cross-country exchange of information and practices and to initialise the transnational cooperation in the field of company and sector specifications. Since November 2007, roundabout 110 colleagues participated in the events and conferences of INNOTrans.

4.1. National Sector Reports and Working Papers

A central result of the project implementation was the processing and assessment of the specific national sector situation in the form of country reports about the wood and furniture industry. These sector analyses were prepared according to agreed criteria in the first four months. In accordance with the project objectives and our work interests, the national sector reports were concentrated on the following information:

- Economic underlying data of the wood and furniture sector (production, enterprises. Employment, turnover, markets etc.)
- Information about the structure of the sector and its companies
- Labour and social standards
- Forms of trade union and company-based interest representation, employee rights of determination in companies
- Strengths and drawbacks of innovations
- Results of the structural change and internationalisation with regards for work and innovations

The **national sector profiles** inform et al. about the current sector development in the participating countries, offer information about country-specific forms of trade union and company-based interest representation as well as the situation of the social dialogue in the specific countries. An essential function of these country reports lie in the acknowledgement of national sector developments with focus on the common European challenges and strategic fields of action for the transnational cooperation of employee organisations. Especially the specific strengths and weaknesses of the sector – and therefore the identification of innovation potentials could be analyzed systematically. All project partners remarked that direct comparisons between different countries have become more easy as well as the clarification of common interests and fields of activity. Especially the national sector reports are an essential base for an increased knowledge about the sector and the transfer of sector-political information between the partners.

The **Working papers**(evaluations and overviews of collective wage agreements, labour and social standards, analyses of companies and the sector about deficits and best-practice approaches in the field of “Good Work” etc.) which were developed during the project were considered as a valuable result apart from the national sector profiles apart from the national sector profiles. A detailed presentation of the basic objectives, contents, tasks and results in the INNOTrans network are available on the project website www.inno-trans.de.

4.2. Benchmarking “Good Work”

Based on the national sector analyses, concentration of the continuation took place towards the strengths and weaknesses of the wood and furniture sector. Therefore, the partners evaluated the development trends in several companies and these were bundled into the form of a European SWOT analysis about structural strengths / weaknesses and chances / risks in the sector. The focus was oriented on the exchange of information on the level beyond single companies and countries. The question connecting all partners was: ‘How can labour-political changes contribute to an improvement of working conditions for the employees as well as being profitable for the enterprises through a better quality, higher standards and more efficiency?’ The preparation of the European Workshop therefore included a benchmarking about the criteria and standards of the union understanding of “Good Work”. Ten national sector enterprises and their shop stewards or company-based union representatives were involved in the process.

4.3. European Workshop

The topic of Labour and Innovation was in the focus of the European Workshop, which took place in May 2008 with 30 participants from trade unions or company-based employee interest representations. This event offered the possibility to debate the interim results of the cooperation in a larger group for the first time and therefore to establish the base of a deeper understanding of the European sector cooperation of employee representatives.

The Workshop was opened with the introducing theses about the importance of “Work and Innovation” from the union perspective by Reinhard Hahn, resort head at the board of directors of the IG Metall. His conclusion: “If one wants to support employment and competitiveness, it is necessary to increase the speed of investments and innovations. [...] Labour-political innovations are an essential prerequisite for the development of economic growth and for the creation of new jobs. [...] It is the task of the trade unions to be active where they can actively participate in the process – on location, in the companies, within the sector. If we want to achieve equal living and working standards throughout Europe, we have to adjust our positions to each other solidarily and to organise these transnationally. Therefore we pledge for a European offence for the topic of “Good Work”. On this base, we are going to be able to react to the challenges and risks in the European wood and furniture sector with capable strategies for job security and for the development of the standards of collective wage agreements as well as in companies.”

Based on this positioning, the partners analysed the topic “Good Work” from the perspective of existing strengths and weaknesses in the sector enterprises specifically for the countries and deduced common approaches for the field of innovation “Good Work” from this analysis. The decisive element here was the concentration on those company questions which were invaluable for the achievement of equal and better working standards throughout Europe which can actively be realised through trade union involvement.

From the point of view of employee organisations, the decisive factors are:

- “Healthy Work” – meaning that a working environment that keeps the employees healthy by minimizing the risk of accidents, the cutback of psychic and physical strain and the reduction of health risks in the work stations
- “Measured Work” – requires limited and plannable working hours with sufficient rest and regeneration times
- “Qualified Work” – systematic further training and the procurement of new qualifications for the future further the security of jobs and working sites on a long term level.
- “Well-paid Work” – with an income that secures the existence and improves the living standards

INNOTrans – Workshop 18. & 19. Mai 2008 (Rom)				
Innovationsfaktoren - Wo gibt es positive Ansätze und beispielhafte Verbesserungen in den Betrieben und/oder in der Branche?				
aus den Ländern...	„Gesunde Arbeit“ Arbeits- und Gesundheitsschutz am Arbeitsplatz und im Betrieb	„Arbeit mit Maß“ Arbeitszeiten und Arbeitszeitgestaltung (z.B. Überstunden, Schichtarbeit ...)	„Qualifizierte Arbeit“ Berufsbildung und Qualifizierung	
Italien	betriebliche Sicherheitsbeauftragte + neue gesetzliche Regelungen für mehr Kontrollen		Betriebe zahlen 0,3% der Rentenbeiträge in Ausbildungs- und Bildungsfonds	
Bulgarien	Viele UN investieren weltweit		EU – Recht ist in bulgarisches Recht einbezogen	
Rumänien	wenige UN haben sich an die europäischen Umweltauflagen gehalten Schutz ausl. Üst. teilweise oder bezahlt (tariflich)			
Deutschland	Der BR hat Absaugungsanlagen im Bereich der Pressen für die in Baruth und Ebersdorf durchgesetzt	Wir brauchen altersgerechte Arbeitsplätze - Holzstaub - Formaldehyd - Lärm hohe Belastungen durch Gewichte (Schränke und Arbeitsplatten aus Granit) hoher Arbeitsstress durch kurze Reaktionszeiten fehlende systematische Gefährdungsanalyse	Probleme mit den Arbeitszeiten im Bereich der AT-Angestellten Stark schwankende Arbeitszeiten in der Produktion hohe Belastungen durch immer neue interne Projekte	Qualifizierungsprobleme bei den Maschinenbedienern fehlende systematische Qualifizierung der Beschäftigten BR muss sich strukturell qualifizieren
Tschechien	gesetzliche Verschlechterung (früher konnten Gewerkschafter sofort gefährliche Arbeiten verbieten/untersagen)	1 x Jahr hat die Gewerkschaft das Recht die Arbeitssicherheit zu kontrollieren	Arbeitszeitgesetz max. 48 Std./Woche -> tariflich zur Zeit 37,5 Std./Woche AG kann pro Woche max. 8 Std. verlängern auf betrieblicher Ebene kann die Arbeitszeit verlängert werden	es fehlen qualifizierte Facharbeiter (z.B. fehlen bei Ploma 60 qualifizierte AN.) Bezahlung der Überstunden wird vertraglich vereinbart
Dänemark	Jeder Betrieb analysieren und die Schritte zur Verbesserung festlegen Zur Arbeitssicherheit gibt es von AG + AN paritätisch besetzte Ausschüsse	Mehrarbeit für 3 Wochen am Stück sind nach Vereinbarung die ersten beiden Stunden werden mit 50% Zuschlag, die restlichen mit 100% vergütet	learning auch in DK: Ausbildungs-/Weiterbildungsfonds	großes Problem ist auch der Widerstand bei den AN im Bereich der Weiterbildung mehr als 100 Unternehmen suchen nach jungen Menschen

The common result of the Workshop was that the achievement of equal and improvement labour standards throughout Europe is a common interest and can be influenced through the active involvement of trade union and company-related activities. According to the perception of all participants, the improvements in companies and of labour policies in the meaning of “Good Work” offer advantages of location in the global competition.

4.4. Information and Kommunikation (Project Website)

The initialisation and ongoing maintenance of the INNOTrans website as a central platform for information and exchange and is one of the major instruments of the border-crossing interconnection. The website was initialised specifically for this purpose and is structured bilingually (English / German). Specific contents are additionally published in the national languages of the project partners.

The major contents of the INNOTrans homepage include:

- A project description, including the main objectives and tasks of the project
- Profiles of the participating unions and contact information for the national project coordinators
- Reports and documents about all events
- Interviews with all project participants

- National sector reports with basic information about the wood / furniture industry
- Information categories for news, interviews, enterprise profiles, sector info from other EU-27 countries and from outside of the EU, work sheets, etc.
- Links to partner organisations and interesting addresses in context with the project
- Downloads of central documents and the essential cooperation results

The contents transported on the website were periodically actualized and extended with new content. In addition to the information of the national network partners, additional sector information from other countries (within or outside the EU) were included if these are important for the sector.

The INNOTrans website is mutually interconnected with the internet presences of the project partners. In correspondence with this website, all partners have made own acknowledgements and national public relations – within their organisations as well as with their partners in the social dialogue.

According to the opinion of all participants, the INNOTrans website is a very useful tool to organise the flow of information within the network. The website allows for a fast access to sector-political information from other European countries. In addition, the partners initiated own activities – like sector information, round letters, conferences and internet publications – to improve the flow of information on the national level. Especially helpful is, that now for the first time there is a possibility to publish sector-political, trade union and company-related information continuously and on a transnational level. This is very helpful to form a presence for the European wood and furniture sector and to inform about the employee's interests in the industry.

4.5. Final Conference

“Solidary Representation of Employee Interests in the Wood and Furniture Industry in a socially renewed Europe”

The most important results and assessments of the project as well as the related conclusions for the continued activities in the sector network were presented in the European Final Conference in Hanover (Germany) on October 5th – 6th, 2008. Roundabout 50 delegates from seven European trade unions and company-based employee representations from 25 enterprises participated in the conference. The participants came from Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Italy and Romania.

The following topics were the centrepiece of the conference:

- Presentation of the essential experiences and results of the network cooperation
- Presentation and debate of the national sector profiles for the wood and furniture sector
- Panel discussion about the importance and the results of INNOTrans for the sector activities on national and European level
- Discussion about company frame conditions and sector political fields of activities in the area of “Good Work” from a shop steward perspective
- Information about the change of qualifications and the exchange of experiences about vocational further training and qualification
- Clarification of common interests and transnationally coordinated approaches – e.g. for relocations, binding European norms and standards, regulation of salaries and working times
- Increased exchange of information and ideas about the importance and future requirements of national, European, company-based and sector-related networking between interest representations
- Presentation of ideas and discussions of suggestions for the continuation in the European sector network wood / furniture
- Discussion about the future exchange of information in the network and further uses for the project website

In the framework of the conference, the participants were able to directly exchange with each other. Three topical discussion panels offered a base for these exchanges. They were focused on (1) the usability of INNOTrans and the transfer of results to the partners’ national practices, (2), sector-political problems and approaches for the development of social labour standards on the base of the practical reports of the partners and (3) a discussion about common step stones for a European sector strategy for the wood / furniture industry.

4.6. European Sector Monitor Wood / Furniture

During the final phase of the project, the national sector analyses were standardized, newly assessed and put together into a European sector monitor for the wood and furniture industry. A comparative overview about national standards of salaries, work and social issues were also included in this report. From the partners’ perspective, this sector monitor is a basic orientation about the development of the wood and furniture industry in the six participating countries. In addition to the national sector profiles, comprehensive information about the European wood and furniture sector were integrated in the sector monitor. The current position and future challenges in the global competition are the centrepiece of this perspective. Especially during the current economic crisis it remains necessary to regard the European sector as a whole in addition to the national development.



European
Sector Monitor
of the wood/furniture industry

Европейски секторен монитор
на дървообработващата и мебелната
промишленост

Monitoraggio settoriale Europeo
dell'industria del legno e del mobile

Monitorul European Sectorial
pentru industria lemnului si mobilei

Evropský sektor sledovat
dřeva/nábytek

We published the monitor in the relevant country languages of the INNOTrans partners as well as an English version, to allow as many colleagues as possible to access the information gathered in the monitor and to use them on location.

The current and future developments of the European wood and furniture sector force the national trade unions –as well as the European Wood and Furniture Federation – to search for common concepts and solutions to counter potential disadvantages for employees resulting from the structural changes and the globalisation. Trade Union sector policy has a function of protection and development for the interests of the working people. It is the task of the trade unions to inform, to represent the interests of the employees, to focus the force and to improve the European cooperation.

*Arbeit und Leben Bielefeld
February 2009
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