

Welcome Address

Georges LIAROKAPIS, President of the CEC European Managers



Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

In the name of the CEC European Managers, it is with great pleasure that I welcome you at the 2008 conference. It is also a great satisfaction for those who contributed to this event taking place in the best possible conditions. The support of the organization I am affiliated to, i.e. CFE-CGC was pretty decisive.

First, we must express our gratitude towards the management of Airbus for their warm welcome and the beautiful room they put at our disposal. We must then thank the Airbus section of CFE-CGC, the aeronautics union and the metal-workers' federation, that all contributed to the success of the project.

Several reasons pushed us to organize this conference here and now: the pending revision of the Directive on European Works Councils, the upcoming French Presidency of the EU as of July 1st 2008, the debate and the representativity of trade unions in France and the labor court elections in France still by the end of 2008.

CEC European Managers intends to carry three messages across.

As you know, European works councils started being established with the implementation of the Directive in 1994. We are now in the midst of the revision of the Directive. Employee organizations are asking for more responsibility and autonomy to go to EWCs whilst employer organizations are more skeptical. On the matter, the Commission – as well as other social partners like the ETUC, Eurocadres and BusinessEurope – is therefore highly sensitive to the matter. CEC is rising to the occasion to contribute to the debate by arguing that the **balanced presence of all professional categories inside European works councils is key to the EWCs success.**

The second message pertains to the **participation of executives and managers in the Surveillance Committees and Boards of European Companies.** Some industry groups are now getting registered as European Companies. It would be bad if that were to happen to the detriment of social dialogue... we shall see why.

Finally, the **link between European Works Councils and Corporate Social Responsibility** had to be made. Indeed, the initiatives of large groups on CSR would be more convincing if they

were completed by the approval – or even the disapproval – of their European works councils. Who else than the wage-earners and their representatives can assess from the inside the image their companies are projecting to the outside world.

In order to carry these three messages across, we called on to high-level specialists I would like to briefly introduce to you.

Jean Lapeyre, former ETUC General Secretary and now in charge of preparing the French EU Presidency, was one of the important stakeholders of the establishment of European works councils. He will – better than anyone would – be able to remind us of the starting ambition that led to this EWC project, of the genesis of EWCs and of the adoption of the 1994 Directive.

Jean Lapeyre will take the floor after the introduction by Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, Member of the European Parliament representing Germany, who could not be present but wished to bring his contribution to our work.

Claudio Stanzani of the Agency for Social Development will then introduce data and statistics allowing us to gain a better understanding of the size and importance European works councils have acquired over the last 10 years.

Tomorrow, the day will start with Tony Hill Smith, intercultural management consultant. This year, Europe is highlighting intercultural dialogue. The setting-up of a European works council is first and foremost an intercultural matter.

Then, some concrete cases, comments and best practice will be presented under the facilitation of a specialist in the field, Mr. Jean-Paul Jacquier, consultant and professor at the Social Sciences University in Toulouse.

Afterwards, we shall be talking about European Companies in a session moderated by Ludger Ramme, CEC's General Secretary. The challenge is to make sure that executives and managers take part in the work of the bodies representing staff at the level of the European Company.

We will see a panel of European social experts give their assessment and views of the revision of the Directive now underway.

François Fatoux, General Delegate of the French Observatory on Corporate Social Responsibility will introduce to us a study on global agreements.

And finally, Nicole Notat, President of the Vigeo rating agency and former General Secretary of CFDT, will honor us with her presence and make the link between EWCs and CSR.

Here you are, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends, this is the agenda of the conference CEC European Managers is proud to have organized for you. I am counting on you to make it as interactive, lively and interesting as possible. I hope you will leave with improved knowledge and acute critical sense after listening to the debates. Thank you for being here with us!