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Trust and solidarity as prerequisites for the cooperation in the Delta Group

The Delta Group can be seen as the first approach to coordinate workers representatives concentrated on the case of internal competition and site selection processes. The group was built as a consequence of the site competition between the plants Rüsselsheim and Trollhättan in 2004. For the effective cooperation in the case of the site competition for the Astra model, group internal trust and solidarity are the main points.

As there is a long history of cooperation through the EEF existing, the Delta Group can build on experiences from former restructuring processes and actions against those. Since 2000 the EEF has changed from an information and consultation committee into a negotiator with management. This change can be seen as a prerequisite for the European coordinated work within the EEF. The main actors of the EEF and the Delta Group have known each other for a long time. There is personal *trust* between the actors. Furthermore the Delta Group has made an important step for the trust-building process by adopting the European Solidarity Pledge. With the Solidarity Pledge the members of the Delta Group have developed and adopted guidelines how they handle the situation of internal competition caused by the management of General Motors. As the members of the Delta Group are in a competitive situation about the Astra production, trust is one of the main factors for cooperation in the group. Since the members can not control each others behaviour, i.e. that no plant negotiates on its own with the management, trust has to exist and agreements followed by the members. The Delta Group built trust through transparency and information exchange within the EEF and the group itself.

The other main factor for the effective cooperation within the Delta Group is *solidarity* between the members of the group and inside the EEF in total. Many experiences with restructuring processes during the last years lead to solidarity with different plants, e.g. the case of Luton or Azambuja. Furthermore, the European actions days arranged by the EEF show solidarity among European plants. It is important that the term solidarity is not just used

as a word, but also that the plants support each other actively. Although the management tried to start competition within the Delta Group the members showed solidarity and acted as one player. With adopting the European Solidarity Pledge the members of the group put their personal goals behind the common goal to preserve all Delta Group plants and sharing the pain of cuts made by management.

As the Delta Group is the first approach to coordinate plants which compete about production, the question arises what can be learnt from the group for the work and organization of EWCs and employee representatives on plant level?

The work of the EEF and the Delta Group show that a path-dependent development of European cooperation is necessary in order to be able to avoid competition between the workers representatives. It is a long process to strengthen trust between trade unions and workers representatives in Europe to be able to influence management decisions in case of restructuring processes. European cooperation between workers representatives needs to become common business to get effective. The Delta Group has become an instrument to coordinate workers representatives and trade unions and to connect vertical integration with horizontal cooperation. The Delta Group showed the necessity to integrate trade unions into the work of workers representatives on plant level. Within European groups of workers representatives the members have to know the different needs and framework requirements of the involved plants. Regular meetings and continuous contacts are required. Furthermore it is important to fix common guidelines and goals before negotiating with the management, as the Delta Group did with its Solidarity Pledge.

The critical resource in building a group of cooperation between plant-level representatives and trade unions in case of restructuring and plant-competition, remains the power of the EWC. There is a need for an EWC which is capable to act more than just as an information and consultation body. Looking at the little influence most EWCs have on management decisions it is first of all important to make EWCs capable of acting before it is possible to apply instruments like the Delta Group on other EWCs.