

## PROJECT APPLICATION (DRAFT)

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To:

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# How to deal with transnational restructuring? a practical online and interactive guide for trade unions and worker representatives in multinational companies

Submitted by industriAll European Trade Union, UNI europa, EFFAT, ETF, EPSU and EFBWW.

## Background

In 2006, the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF), predecessor of industriAll Europe, published a handbook on 'How to deal with transnational company restructuring'. Though not an exhaustive compendium of all the relevant issues related to transnational restructuring, it did have the ambition of providing political guidance and practical tools for the EMF members dealing with cross-border restructuring and striving to develop joint responses at European level.

15 years later, this manual is in urgent need of revision for many practical and compelling reasons. Many new countries joined the European Union, existing legislation was revised and several new directives, regulations and trade union recommendations have been published. Successive economic, financial and health crises have reinforced the trend of almost permanent restructuring. Add to that the drive for digitalisation and the consequences of climate change and it becomes abundantly clear that trade unions and worker representatives in multinational companies would benefit greatly from a reliable and comprehensive, but also accessible and practical guide through the labyrinth of rules and practices on restructuring.

Indeed, useful information is readily available online and in print, but it is scattered over many different websites and sources. To name but a few: the Eurofound Restructuring Monitor, ETUI publications and online resources, the website of the European Commission, the 'EWC: Fit for change' EU-funded project VP/2015/003/0021 that was managed by the Austrian federation GPA, the e-doc on restructuring developed by the Belgian trade union ABVV Metaal in 2020 and of course the websites of the ETUC, the European Trade Union Federations and the national trade unions where practical recommendations and political guidance for trade union action in the event of a transnational restructuring are available.

It is also clear that such guide need not be restricted to one particular economic sector. Whether it is an aluminium smelter, a department store or a producer of construction aggregates, the impact of restructuring on the workforce is equally disruptive. Whether it is a package delivery service, a hotel chain or a care home for older and disabled people, the same European directives on collective redundancies, cross-border mergers or transfer of undertakings will apply.

For all these reasons, the European trade union federations (ETUF) that are actively involved in supporting trade unions and worker representatives in multinational companies, have decided to jointly apply for the financing of the development of an online, interactive guide on transnational restructuring in multinational companies by the European Worker Participation Fund. We would also like to count on the practical assistance of the EWPC for a number of technical aspects such as the preparation of calls for tender.

## **Objective**

The outcome of the project should be an online, interactive tool, which allows trade unions and worker representatives in multinational companies to quickly find recommendations on how to anticipate and manage restructuring, as well as the most recent background information concerning any type of restructuring they may be confronted with and help them spot the best resources for trade union action. Such information should contain mainly European, but also national legal references as well as trade union recommendations and practical tips and tricks.

The ultimate goal is to provide a highly accessible, easy to understand overview of all the key information one must have to anticipate and manage change in a multinational company and which are already available online, but compiled in one central access point that the user can easily navigate through.

Once the tool is launched, it will also be necessary to promote its uptake by the target group by using different promotional materials and media channels, such as bookmarks and flyers that can be used at relevant ETUF, ETUC and ETUI events as well as online advertising.

## **Concept**

Rather than to edit a new, more complete and fully updated handbook, the choice was made to go for a digital, online solution. A book is a snapshot and quickly outdated. A web-based tool can be adjusted whenever new elements become available. With a book, you may have to plough through many pages before you find the information you were looking for. Online you should land on the right place with just a few clicks. A book is static, whereas the dynamics of the internet allow you to go deeper and wider by simply following the suggested links. Of course, these benefits will only truly materialise if the tool is not only complete and correct in terms of content, but also looks attractive and is easy to use.

A very first impression of what this could look like is available in the attached PowerPoint document. It opens with a word of welcome and instructions on how to use the tool, but the main access gate is the page with all different types of restructuring, one per 'bubble', including a short definition. Clicking on the type of restructuring you are dealing with, brings you immediately to the right chapter. Within each chapter, it should be easy to click around between the different aspects ('boxes'). For instance: what rights to information and consultation do workers have when certain activities are spun off? What action can national trade unions undertake when a site will be closed? Or what role do the European authorities play when a company announces that it intends to enter into a cross-border merger? For each topic, there is also a page where you can find links to further reading from different sources.

Reference to trade union contact persons will be added wherever available and needed in order to incentivise users to get in touch with the most relevant (national and/or European) trade union organisations, especially when they intend to take action. While information which is already publicly available online can be accessible to all, access to the specific trade union policy documents and practical recommendations should be restricted to the ETUFs' affiliated trade union organisations and their members.

A good example of an interactive, web-based tool is the [www.constructionworkers.eu](http://www.constructionworkers.eu) website that was developed by the European Federation of Building and Woodworkers (EFBWW), where you can easily find a clear and concise overview of what rules exist on subjects such as working time, minimum wages or sickness compensation in all EU Member States. Although more academic in its conception, the European Social Dialogue Database <https://esddb.eu/> of the ETUI is another example. Here you can find with just a few clicks what joint opinions, declarations or other tools have been produced by the European sectoral social dialogue committees.

Although the basic concept is quite clear, there are still several challenges and open questions. How deep should the tool go into national rules and regulations? How to transpose the sometimes very technical and juridical language of legal texts and trade union resolutions into generally understandable wording without oversimplifying things? How many summary tables, statistics, graphics and other background documents can be included without overloading it? How diversified should the selection of topics be? (e.g. One general chapter on mergers or also a separate one for cross-border mergers?) All these questions, and probably a lot more, can only be answered during the development process. This will require a permanent and close cooperation between both the content and web developers on one side and the project Steering Group on the other side.

## **Project management**

The elaboration of the practical online and interactive guide will require two development teams:

The **content team** will be commissioned with

- the identification of all different types of restructuring
- the identification of all different practices to anticipate and manage change in multinational companies
- the collection of all relevant EU and national legislation;
- the collection of all relevant trade union policy documents;
- the collection of existing online sources of information (Eurofound, ETUI, ETUC, ETUFs, national trade union organisations' websites) and other relevant background documentation (publications, statistics, case studies...)
- setting up the general structure of the online tool (which boxes?), on the basis of the existing first concept
- where necessary, summarising and converting the collected information into comprehensible language that can be included in the online tool ('filling the boxes')
- preparing a glossary of frequently used keywords and acronyms
- permanent consultation with the Project Leader, the Steering Group and the web team, including participation in coordination meetings.

The **web team** will be commissioned with

- the design and development of the online functionalities (with an important focus on interactivity and instinctive navigation)
- the design and development of the look and feel of the online tool (colours, font, illustrations...)
- the overall technical design, development and support of the tool (including access restrictions and usability on various platforms)
- the integration of contributions delivered by the content team
- permanent consultation with the Project Leader, the Steering Group and the content team, including participation in coordination meetings.

The content team and the web team can be two different suppliers or only one delivering two teams, but both should in any case get started at the same time and be able to smoothly integrate their respective missions. Indeed, the identified content will influence the structure of the online tool, while the limitations and opportunities of a web-based approach will have an impact on what kind of content can be delivered.

In a first phase, all developments should be done in English, but an extension to several other languages should be taken into account from the start.

Furthermore, a **Steering Group** should be set up, which will be composed of

- one representative of each European Trade Union Federation involved in this project
- one representative of the EWPCC
- one representative from each of the main institutions whose sources of information will be compiled and who are experienced with producing and managing such online tool (e.g. Eurofound, the European Commission, the ETUI).

The Steering Group will

- meet whenever necessary and at least once every 3 months throughout the duration of the project
- in Brussels, at a meeting place to be decided on a punctual basis
- to discuss the progress made, evaluate the suggestions of the content and web team, decide on content and web design related aspects
- chaired by the project leader

For intermediate tests of partially delivered content and web functionalities and for the final test before going live with the online guide, existing restructuring working groups of all involved ETUFs can be engaged.

The function of **project leader** will be assumed by Bruno Demaître, company policy adviser of industriAll Europe.

## Timeline

September-October 2021

Presentation of the project to the EWPCC, evaluation and decision by the Board of Trustees.

If approved

November-December 2021

ETUI call for tender for the content team and the web team.

January 2022

First meeting of the Steering Group, decision about the choice of content team and web team.

February 2022

Start of design and development by the content team and the web team.

March 2022

Second meeting of the Steering Group, response to first suggestions made by the content team and the web team.

March-December 2022

Development of the online guide by the content team and the web team.

June 2022

Third meeting of the Steering Group, intermediate evaluation of progress made.

September 2022

Fourth meeting of the Steering Group, intermediate evaluation of progress made.

December 2022

Delivery of the final product, ready for testing before going live.

Fifth meeting of the Steering Group, evaluation of the final product.

January 2023

Final adaptations to the online guide on the basis of the test results and the comments of the Steering Committee.

February 2023

The practical online and interactive guide for trade unions and worker representatives in multinational companies on how to deal with transnational restructuring goes live (launch at 2023 EWPC conference?).

March 2023

Sixth and final meeting of the Steering Group, evaluation of the course and outcome of the project.

Discussion about follow-up initiatives. These will include, i.a.

- the provision of the tool in additional languages (fr, cs, de, es, it, pl, sv, bg...)
- training for trade unions and worker representatives on how to use the online tool (e.g. joint ETUF/ETUI seminars)
- permanent maintenance of the online tool (both technical and contentwise)
- monitoring of the access to the guide

These aspects will be part of a subsequent project application as decided by the Steering Group.

**Budget**

| <b>description</b>  | <b>contribution<br/>industriAll Europe</b> | <b>contribution<br/>other ETUFs</b> | <b>contribution<br/>EWPF</b> |
|---|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Steering Group meetings</b><br>6 meetings January 2022-March 2023  |  |                                     |                              |
| unit cost:<br>500 EUR per participant per meeting   | 3000 EUR                                   | 15000 EUR                           | -                            |
| catering:<br>45 EUR per person, per meeting day<br>12 participants  |  |                                     | 3240 EUR                     |
| travel and accommodation for 3<br>guests from abroad<br>unit cost 400 EUR   |  |                                     | 7200 EUR                     |
| <b>project leader</b><br>unit cost 500 EUR/day, estimated at 2<br>days per month for the duration of<br>the project (17 months)   | 17000 EUR                                  |                                     |                              |
| <b>content team</b><br>research, tool development, content<br>delivery, coordination with EWPC, P<br>project leader and web team,<br>participation in Steering Group<br>meetings  |  |                                     | 40000 EUR                    |
| <b>web team</b><br>tool design and development,<br>coordination with EWPC, P, project<br>leader and content team,<br>participation in Steering Group<br>meetings  |  |                                     | 40000 EUR                    |
| <b>promotional materials</b><br>bookmark, flyer, online advertising   |  |                                     | 5000 EUR                     |
| <b>Other Expenses</b><br>translation of documents collected by<br>the content team, subcontracting for<br>graphical design by the web team,<br>room rental (to be identified,<br>motivated and confirmed case by<br>case) |  |                                     | 5000 EUR                     |
| <b>totals</b>   | 20000 EUR                                  | 15000 EUR                           | 100440 EUR                   |