
European Works Councils: more rights and participation for employees

MEPs backed a proposal to improve democracy in the workplace by increasing the number of European Works Councils (EWCs) and strengthening their role.

On Thursday, Plenary adopted a motion for a resolution with 385 votes in favour, 118 against and 99 abstentions calling on the Commission to propose a revision of the EWC Directive by the 31st January 2024.

MEPs highlighted the need to raise awareness and increase the visibility of EWCs and their potential benefits among employee and management representatives and to create incentives in favour of their development, wider use and effective enforcement.

In particular, they want to ensure the timely and meaningful consultation between company management and employees' representatives on matters of transnational character that could have an impact on jobs and working conditions of the European workforce.

The text also proposes to terminate agreements preceding the first EWC Directive, in order to make sure that all EWC agreements are governed by the same rights and obligations. Finally, MEPs want to introduce effective, dissuasive and proportionate penalties for non-compliance of the Directive; improve the resolution of disputes; clarify the scope of confidential information; and ensure the access to justice of EWCs.

Quote

Rapporteur [Dennis Radtke \(EPP, DE\)](#) said: "When companies act more and more European and global, participation in the workplace must be adapted accordingly. We call on the Commission to revise the Directive on European Works Councils to strengthen European democracy in the workplace!"

"We don't want to reinvent the wheel, but to strengthen existing law and implement it better. The many problems that European Works Councils have been regularly reporting to me for years

can no longer be ignored. It is not acceptable that some works councils spend years unsuccessfully seeking a competent court to sue for their rights. That is not my idea of the rule of law."

"Workplace participation must finally be seen as an added value for companies and not as a hurdle. Particularly in view of the digital and green transition, in my eyes this can only succeed if European, national and local works councils are closely involved in possible restructuring processes."

Background

EWCs are bodies representing European employees of a multinational company, ensuring information and dialogue with its management on company affairs and significant decisions at EU level which could impact working conditions and employment.

The [Commission's May 2018 report and evaluation](#) on the Directive showed that over the last years, information for workers improved in terms of quality and scope, but there is room for improvement as the Directive has not increased the rate at which new EWCs are set up.

Further information

[The adopted text will be available here \(2 February 2023\)](#)

[Press Release on the committee vote \(30.11.2022\)](#)

[Rapporteur Dennis Radtke \(EPP, DE\)](#)

[Steps of the procedure](#)

[European Commission report and evaluation on the European Works Councils Directive \(May 2018\)](#)

[European Works Councils Directive \(May 2009\)](#)

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