

**REPORT FROM THE DANSKE UNIONS SEMINAR
IN DENMARK 14.TH - 16.TH OF MAY 2008**

IMPROVING CROSS-CULTURAL COOPERATION

Employee representatives from Danske Bank in Norway, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Denmark participated in the Danske Unions seminar in Denmark from the 14th of May to the 16th of May. The objectives of the seminar, which was the second of three major activities in the EU-project, were among others to discuss cross cultural cooperation and the cultural differences present within the Group. The new European Works Council (EWC) agreement in the Danske Bank Group was also debated in order to gain an understanding of its limits and opportunities.

Following an official opening the seminar, **Lars Mørch**, Senior Executive Vice President of the Danske Bank European Works Council presented the vision and mission within Human Resources in the Danske Bank Group. In relation to this Lars Mørch commented on skills which the Group would be searching for when recruiting staff in the future. IT skills and an international mindset were some of the skills mentioned. "Knowledge of the English language is important though local business will still be done in the local language." Lars Mørch said.

Per Skovhus, member of the Executive Board in the Danske Bank Group gave an insight into the organization and market profile of the Group. He also dealt with the subprime crisis and its effect on the financial institutions' growth and performance in the past year. In relation to this Per Skovhus mentioned that the future growth strategy will focus on organic growth rather than growth by acquisition.

THE CHALLENGES OF CROSS-CULTURAL COOPERATION

On the second day **Christina Colclough**,

Vice Secretary general at NFU brought intercultural co-operation into focus. Christina Colclough stressed the importance of understanding the cultural differences that challenge the Danske Unions network. Among them are language barriers, a frequent change of representatives, a lack of trust amongst representatives, incomplete feedback procedures and labour market differences. "In order to rise to the challenges, you must talk about the differences. Ensuring a common understanding of core concepts and discussing expectations to what is a satisfactory outcome of the cooperation is highly important" Christina Colclough said.

SUPPORT FROM NFU AND UNI-FINANCE

Allan Bang, President of NFU and UNI-Finance explained in which areas the two finance confederations would be able to assist and support the ongoing development of Danske Unions. One of the important purposes of UNI-Finance is to secure global employee rights and the confederation is actively involved in networks for company representatives



LARS MØRCH



Christina Colclough
CHRISTINA COLCLOUGH

from multinational companies. NFU offers a broad range of expertise both directly from the NFU secretariat as well as through its many existing networks. The confederation has a detailed knowledge of cross-border collaboration and of establishing and developing European Work Councils. NFU can also be of assistance if information on new EU developments or new directives is needed.

As the last speaker of day two **Hans Christian Riise** from the Nordea Union Board took part in the seminar to explain the cooperative agreement structure in Union in Nordea. What is extraordinary about Nordeas organization in the area is the Consultative Committees that are based on cross-border Business Area requirements. The objectives of the Consultative Committees are to handle changes that affect more than one country and to deal with changes that are going to have an impact on the daily work of employees.

The last day of the seminar encompassed a presentation of Danske Unions by Finn Roy Orholm from Finansforbundet in the Norwegian Fokus Bank and Robert Taylor from IBOA, Ireland.

THE FUTURE OF DANSKE UNIONS
As the seminar was coming to an end and the participants were about to return to their daily work in their local national branches, the future of Danske Unions was brought up as a subject of discussion. The overall conclusions from the past three days were that building up trust in the network among representatives and with the employers' representatives was central to the future cooperation. The importance of sharing information across borders in order spread best practice and experiences was also stressed. It was decided that a part of the homepage www.danskeunions.org should be reserved for employee representatives and work as a channel, where vital information could be exchanged.

FORMALISING DANSKE UNIONS
The preparation procedure as well as the follow up procedure in the Danske Bank European Works Council and the Exclusive Board were also debated. In the future representatives will try harder to affect the agenda of meetings with management to ensure that the EWC becomes a consultative body rather than just a formalised channel of information.

If cross-cultural cooperation is to develop in the future, it is relevant to start a dialogue with management concerning the fact that the representatives need time out of the daily work for taking care of union matters. Improving the English skills of representatives is also a focus area. More seminars and courses will be arranged with the scope of sharing information about the development in the national branches and learning about relevant EU regulations in the area of the financial sector.

All of the representatives were favourably disposed towards the concept of formalising Danske Unions and decided to look further into the future opportunities of giving Danske Unions collective bargaining rights in some areas.

At the end, the representatives concluded that the objectives of the seminar had been fulfilled. Finn Roy Orholm from Norway commented: "A very good seminar, we have made a solid base for further cooperation". "An excellent seminar which has given us the opportunity of understanding each others differences and expectations for the future cooperation." Marianne Pedersen from Denmark said.



PARTICIPANTS IN THE DANSKE UNIONS SEMINAR