

Restructuring in the Electricity Industry: A Toolkit for Socially Responsible Restructuring with a Best Practice Guide

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A report for EURELECTRIC, EPSU and EMCEF by David Tarren, Dr. Howard Potter, Dr. Sian Moore - Working Lives Research Institute

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Executive Summary

Given the range of various European Union directives concerning market liberalisation, restructuring has become an ongoing issue for social partners operating in the electricity sector in Europe (p5).

Within the context of the European Social Model, effective social dialogue between employers and trade unions is understood to be the best way to address the effects of restructuring. This practice is enhanced by both European and national legislative frameworks as well as a strong business case (p9).

For social dialogue to be effective it must be timely, active, collaborative and fully engage in an ongoing fashion the workforce concerned. It also should always have mechanisms for monitoring progress and evaluating outcomes. Social dialogue must rest upon a realistic understanding of the particular positions that each of the social partners hold. Instigating social dialogue

in SMEs,
outsourcing and situations involving atypical workers can help reduce the effects of
`silent
restructuring` (p14).
Anticipation and transparency is central to any successful restructuring. These
approaches should
become part of the daily life of any organisation if it is to manage change effectively
on an ongoing
basis (p21). To develop the trust that comes with anticipation and transparency
there should be a
variety of structures and mechanisms that are dedicated to restructuring.
Long-term workforce planning that involves formal retraining mechanisms and an
ethos of lifelong
learning will assist in the both the general employability of the worker and their
possible redeployment
within the company (p31). Restructuring choices that involve the loss of
experienced employees, such
as early retirement, contributes to the risk of skills flight at both company and
sectoral levels (p34).
The experiences of restructuring may have a detrimental effect on the health of
workers, both those
that leave companies and those that remain. To minimise this positive health
strategies should be in
place before restructuring occurs and become part of organisational life thereafter
(p40).
Depending on the circumstances within which restructuring occurs, public
authorities at local, national
and/or European levels may have a beneficial role to play in conjunction with the
activities of the social
partners (p45). This is especially the case where the business undergoing
restructuring is the major
employer within a specific geographical area.
The social partners may be able to obtain specific assistance through existing
European funding
streams to manage change for their employees and members (p46). Given the
increasingly

transnational nature of the sector, there are more and more opportunities to consider good practice approaches to restructuring from businesses elsewhere. This can be facilitated through existing European level social partner organisations.

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