English for European trade unionists

Level Four

European Works Councils

The ETUI-REHS is financially supported by the European Commission
Foreword

Effective communication is an essential tool in the goal of building a European trade union identity that transcends political and geographical borders. The ability to speak a language other than one’s own is an important step towards achieving this goal, enabling trade unionists from across the European Union to exchange information and experience, and to learn about other cultural and trade union contexts.

The Education Department of ETUI-REHS (formerly ETUCO) has been involved in the promotion and delivery of foreign language training since 1993. This activity has involved a number of publications, including English for European Trade Unionists Levels 3 + 4 which first appeared in 1995 under the auspices of a LINGUA-funded project. This material has now been revised and updated, and made available as electronic files for the first time.

The new units are:

- Introductory unit: Language learning strategies for European trade unionists
- Three level 3 units (upper intermediate): Trade union organisation; Trade unions and Europe; Health and Safety
- Three level 4 units (advanced): Working Women; Workers of the World; European Works Councils

A description of the language level, a profile of the target group, advice on how to use the materials and a grid showing the full contents can be found in the Introductory Unit. Tutors will find additional advice on approaches and methodology in the Language Trainers Guide published in 2005.

My thanks to all those who have participated in the preparation and production of these materials. We hope that they will contribute to improved communications and better understanding amongst trade unionists throughout Europe.

Jeff Bridgford
Director
ETUI-REHS Education

Authors
Jacky Barry  ETUI-REHS Education Languages Adviser
Margaret Bremner  Freelance Tutor, UK
Peter Donaghy  Freelance Tutor, UK
Vidia Ganase  Trainer in communications and management, FGA-CFDT, France
Joan Hewitt  Senior Lecturer, English Language Centre, Northumbria University, UK

Editor
Jacky Barry

Layout + DVD
John Eden  Freelance Video Producer

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## Acknowledgements

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We have tried to contact all relevant organisations and individuals but would welcome information regarding any that have inadvertently been overlooked so that permission can be sought and due acknowledgement given.
Looking ahead

In this unit you will focus on the way European Works Councils are set up and run, and look at some typical EWC agreements. You will also consider ways of speaking more effectively, to get your point across, so that you can make more effective contributions in meetings. You will think about the importance of cultural differences in transnational meetings.

You will study the following:

Vocabulary
- for describing business organisations and finance
- for understanding EWC agreements
- for understanding how an EWC works
- for understanding management
- for talking about different sources of energy
- for use in meetings

Grammar
- making comparisons
- expressing time
- dealing with data and statistics

Functions
- introductions
- emails and text messages
- participating effectively in meetings
- report writing
European Works Councils

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Where are you from and where do you work?

On the map above, identify where you live and say a few words about the attractions of your city/environment.

On the map above, identify the countries where your organisation or company (or a multinational with which you are familiar) has plants and/or offices.
Introducing yourself

In pairs, discuss the following questions:

1. How do you feel when you have to introduce yourself at a meeting?
2. Do you find it difficult to understand names when people introduce themselves?
3. How can you help people to understand/remember details about you?
   e.g. can you explain something about your name? Is your first name traditional in your family? Does your surname (family name) indicate where your family originated from? Is it frequently found in your area?)

Some guidelines

We frequently have to introduce ourselves either in a formal situation (for example at an international meeting) or on social occasions. The names we say (our own name, our trade union organisation, company, home, town, etc.) will generally be unfamiliar to our listeners - in fact they will be foreign!

We need to help others to understand and remember who we are and where we come from.

These are some of the ways we can help:

- speak clearly
- speak slowly
- add brief explanations
- give English explanations of acronyms where possible
- pause between details

Can you add any other advice for making introductions easier to understand?
1 \textit{Complete the following personal checklist where appropriate:}

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. First name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. Surname \textit{(family name)}</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Home town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Name of trade union organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. English translation/explanation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Job title</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Name of company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Main product/service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Other relevant information</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2 \textit{Working in pairs, practise introducing yourself, first of all at a basic level (numbers 1-4), then add more details (5-7 and 8-10) as appropriate.}

3 \textit{Finally, everyone introduces themselves to the whole group in a more formal setting. Participants should try to write down as many names and details as they can understand.}
European Works Councils

1 In pairs discuss the following two questions:

i. In what circumstances are companies obliged to establish EWCs?

ii. What is the role of EWCs?

2 Now read the following text and answer the questions that follow:

This year [2004] marks the 10th anniversary of the adoption of the European Works Council Directive in 1994. Some 10 million workers across the European Union now have the right to information and consultation on company decisions at EU-level through their EWC representatives. But there is still some way to go before the legislation meets its full objectives.

The EWC Directive (94/45/EC) applies to all companies with 1,000 or more workers, and at least 150 employees in each of two or more EU Member States.

It obliges them to establish European Works Councils to bring together workers’ representatives (usually trade unionists) from all the EU Member States the company operates in, to meet with management, receive information and give their views on current strategies and decisions affecting the enterprise and its workforce.

Of the estimated 1,800 companies covered by the legislation, some 640 (36%) have EWCs in operation. However, many of these are larger, multinational firms, so that the proportion of employees represented by EWCs is much higher: more than 60% or ten million workers across Europe.

- The majority of companies covered by the Directive employ less than 5,000 workers - only 23% have EWCs.
- Among multinationals employing 10,000 people or more, 61% have EWCs.

The existing coverage of just over one-third of companies with EWCs after 10 years could be seen as a depressing outcome. The trade union side, however, sees it as no mean achievement, knowing the battles that workers have had to fight to get this far. Nonetheless, it is clearly inadequate. The companies that have so far failed to set up EWCs tend to be smaller enterprises, often with a low level of trade union organisation, with managements hostile to involving workers...
in decision-making, or companies that have undergone drastic restructuring in recent years. An active, representative trade union organisation is the first guarantee of a well-functioning EWC.

Enlargement will increase the number of companies covered by the EWC Directive, possibly by some 10-20%. All the new Member States have already transposed the Directive into national law. By May 2004, a number of subsidiaries in all ten states, as well as the three candidate countries, had reached voluntary agreements on setting up EWCs: the largest number being in Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary.

Structure

The majority of European Works Councils meet once a year, with an extra meeting as required. The structure generally conforms to one of two models: workers’ representatives only, or joint worker/management representation, and is with a huge range of economic, financial and social issues, including research, environment, investment, health and safety and equal opportunities.

The ETUC strongly recommends that EWCs should have smaller steering committees that can meet at short notice, and these exist in about 50% of them. Training is very important to enable EWC members to fulfil their role, but is only paid for by some 40% of companies, while funding for vital expert assistance is even rarer.

The Directive needs updating

The revision foreseen in the original Directive is already four years overdue, and the ETUC is calling for urgent steps to strengthen the law. In recent years, there have been many cases of companies, such as Renault in Vilvoorde, Belgium, carrying out major restructuring without consultation, in defiance of the spirit of the Directive.

Since 1994 the industrial relations landscape has changed considerably. The 2000 Lisbon Agenda created a new framework for economic renewal. The Directives of 2001 on the European Company Statute and 2002 on workers’ information and consultation have created an urgent need for harmonisation of EU law.

The ETUC is proposing a number of important changes:

- A clearer definition of information and consultation;
- Redefinition of the notion of confidentiality, to ensure EWC members are not prevented from communicating with their trade unions, for example;
- A reduction in the period allowed for negotiating agreements, from three years to one year;
European Works Councils

- A framework of sanctions for companies that flout the law, and a legal right for workers’ representatives to challenge breaches of agreements;
- The right to training for EWC members - covering languages and economic, financial and social affairs;
- Better access to expert advice;
- The right to hold preparatory and follow-up meetings;
- The right for EWC members to enter company sites.

Relevant EU legislation:
- Directive 2002/14/EC establishing a framework for employees’ information and consultation.

Extract from ETUC FACTSHEET July 2006

With reference to the text above, indicate whether the following statements are true (T) or false (F):

2.1 The EWC Directive applies to all companies in the EU that employ more than 1000 workers. T/F
2.2 The workers have to be represented by trade unionists. T/F
2.3 The EWC is designed to give employees the right to have information and to be consulted on company-wide affairs. T/F
2.4 Just over a third of the companies covered by the legislation have so far established EWCs. T/F
2.5 In 10 years, 20 million workers have gained the right to information and consultation. T/F
2.6 The large multinationals have the highest percentage take-up of EWCs. T/F
2.7 The more active a trade union organisation is, the more likely it is that companies will have effective EWCs. T/F
2.8 The member states that joined the EU in 2004 are not yet covered by the EWC Directive. T/F
2.9 Improvements in industrial relations suggest there is no need to revise the Directive. T/F
2.10 The ETUC wants penalties to be introduced for companies that do not act in accordance with the law. T/F
3. **Provide words or phrases to explain the meaning of the following words as used in the text (the numbers in brackets refer to the lines in the text where these words occur):**

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<td>3.2</td>
<td>strategies (15-20)</td>
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<td>3.3</td>
<td>no mean achievement (25-30)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.4</td>
<td>drastic restructuring (35-40)</td>
</tr>
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<td>3.5</td>
<td>transposed (40-45)</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>subsidiaries (40-45)</td>
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<td>3.7</td>
<td>steering committee (50-55)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>harmonisation (70-75)</td>
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<td>3.9</td>
<td>confidentiality (70-75)</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>breaches of agreements (80-85)</td>
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</table>
The role of European Works Councils

Extract from an interview with

Jean Claude Le Douaron
(Education officer (EWCs)
ETUI-REHS Education)

Stage 1
Before listening to the interview, discuss the following questions:

- What do you see as the function of EWCs?
- Can EWCs influence company policies?
- Is it worth EWC delegates trying to learn a common language?

Stage 2
Listen to interview

Listen once to get an overview of the speaker’s opinions and at least once more to focus on his ideas with regard to the above questions.

Stage 3
Compare your answers to the views expressed by Jean Claude

Pay particular attention to any new or different ideas that he expresses.

Stage 4
Consult the transcript of the interview in the Study Guide

Listen to the interview again in order to resolve any comprehension difficulties you may have had.
Comparing EWC Agreements

Work in pairs.

Compare the extracts from two Agreements to establish European Works Councils and answer the questions below.

Each person should read one of the Agreements and then each pair should discuss their responses to the questions together:

1. In what way is the term ‘EWC’ used differently in Company X and Company Y?
2. How is the number of workers’ representatives decided?
3. How many employer representatives are there?
4. What safeguards, if any, are expressed for workers’ representatives?
5. Identify the sections in the two agreements that relate to the minimum that European legislation says must be covered by the EWC:
   - The structure, economic and financial situation of the company
   - The probable developments of the business, and production and sales
   - The number of jobs and future prospects
   - Investment
   - Substantial changes in organisation, new working methods or processes
   - Transfers of production
   - Mergers, cutbacks or closures
   - Collective redundancies
6. What other competencies are included in the Agreements?
AGREEMENT with Group Company X on the establishment of a Euro Forum as a basis for promoting social dialogue at European level.

Composition

Workers’ representatives

1. Workers’ representatives within the Company Euro Forum make up the European Works Council.

2. As a matter of principle workers from the different production units and groups of business activities in Europe shall be represented appropriately within the EWC. However, in appointing workers’ representatives to the EWC, only those countries will be considered in which 100 or more workers are employed. According to the terms of this Agreement management representatives (e.g. administrators and managers) are not included under the designation "workers". The number of workers’ representatives for each country shall be broken down as follows:
   - up to 1000 workers: one representative
   - for every additional thousand: one representative (up to a maximum of 10 representatives)

3. Members of the EWC can only be workers a) who are employed by the company at the time of the meeting of the Euro Forum b) are members of a worker representation body or, if there is no worker representation, were elected to become members of the EWC by employees according to national regulations.

4. The nomination of workers’ representatives and the duration of their term of office shall comply with national regulations.

5. For each Member State entitled to send delegates it is recommended to appoint at least 3 deputy members.

6. In the framework of their activities for the EWC, workers’ representatives shall enjoy the same protection as they would as national representatives.

Employer’s representatives

The European Works Council shall meet together with management representatives in the framework of the Euro Forum. Management shall appoint no more than 5 representatives to these meetings.

Scope of information and consultation

Management shall provide information on the following topics:

a. the economic and financial situation of the Group in Europe, future trends in business, production, sales, and the employment situation;

b. investments, significant changes in the organisation of the Group as well as the introduction of new working and manufacturing methods;

c. transfers of production, mergers, de-mergers, restructuring, changes in participating interests, in as much as these measures significantly affect workers in the companies concerned;

d. downsizing or closure of companies, sites or major parts of these units, collective redundancies;

e. health and safety in the workplace and environmental protection;

f. other essential topics affecting workers’ interests which have repercussions on several countries represented in the Group Euro Forum.
European Works Councils

AGREEMENT with Group Company Y on the institution of a European Works Council for the purposes of information and consultation

Composition

1. The European Works Council shall be jointly composed of representatives of the central management and of workers’ representatives.

2. The employer’s representatives shall be appointed by the management on the basis of the following criteria:
   - they must be able to speak authoritatively for the management of the company on the European level, have overall knowledge of the group and be able to answer questions put to them by the workers’ representatives;
   - they must not be more numerous than the workers’ representatives.

3. The workers’ representatives shall be chosen according to their national law. The management representatives of the group and the production units may not influence their choice.

4. Each actual delegate shall be covered by a deputy delegate, whereby the deputies or substitutes shall be elected to replace the official office-holders who are unable to attend. To this end, the deputies shall be kept informed of the activities of the EWC so that they can carry out the duties of the office holder.

5. The number of delegates shall be calculated as follows:
   - One delegate for each country in which the Group is active by means of one or more undertakings employing a total (for all the undertakings together) of over 50 and up to 250 workers;
   - Two delegates for each country in which the Group is active by means of one or more undertakings employing a total (for all the undertakings together) of over 250 and up to 700 workers;
   - Three delegates for each country in which the Group is active by means of one or more undertakings employing a total (for all the undertakings together) of over 700 workers and up to 1000 workers;
   - Four delegates for each country in which the Group is active by means of one or more undertakings employing a total (for all the undertakings together) of over 1000 and up to 2500 workers;
   - Five delegates for each country in which the Group is active by means of one or more undertakings employing a total (for all the undertakings together) of over 2500 workers.

Competencies

1. The European Works Council must be informed and consulted on subjects of strategic importance concerning the Group as a whole or at least two undertakings situated in at least two countries.

2. The management of the Group shall inform and consult the workers’ representatives on the following subjects:
   1) the structure of the Group;
   2) its economic and financial situation;
   3) the future prospects of sales and production;
   4) the employment position and the prospects for employment;
   5) investments
   6) basic changes in organisation;
   7) introduction of new methods of work and production;
   8) transfers of production or of research facilities.
European Works Councils

9) mergers, restructuring, downsizing or closure of undertakings or considerable parts of these;
10) collective redundancies
11) the situation and trends regarding workers’ qualifications;
12) training and redeployment activities;
13) developments in wage costs;
14) developments in working time;
15) developments in working conditions;
16) questions concerning health and safety and the environment;
17) other matters and projects that may fundamentally affect the interests of the workers of the Group.

B

These are only extracts from the two Agreements.

What other provisions (e.g. frequency of meetings) would you expect to find in a formal agreement of this nature?

Compare your answers with the suggestions in the Study Guide.

C

Form a sentence or phrase to explain the meaning of the following expressions used to describe the scope of information and consultation/ competencies in the two Agreements (reference to the Company and specific item is indicated in brackets):

1. Transfers of production (Xc)
2. Collective redundancies (Xd)
3. Employment position (Y4)
4. Downsizing (Y9)
5. Training and redeployment (Y12)

D

Discussion points (for those directly involved in EWCs):

- How does your Agreement compare with Agreements X and Y?
- How many workers’ and management representatives are there?
- What training do delegates receive?
- What provision is there for time-off for EWC work?
## Study Box 1

### Agreements: some useful expressions

| **mandate** | **official instruction** (authority to vote in particular way)  
*The representative went to the meeting with a mandate from her union organisation to vote for a change in the rules.* |
|-------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| **term (of office)** | **limited period of time in a post** (job)  
*The President was elected for a 4 year term (of office).* |
| **terms** | (1) **conditions**  
*Under the terms of the agreement, the company will pay all travel expenses.*  
(2) **expressions**  
*We are going to learn some new terms for talking about agreements today.* |
| **provisions** | (1) **conditions / stipulations**  
*There were no provisions in the Agreement for language training.*  
(2) **supplies** (of food or necessities)  
*They need provisions for their journey.* |
| **confidence** | **feeling of trust/belief**  
*I have confidence in your ability to do this job.* |
| **in confidence** | **as a secret**  
*I’m telling you this information about my boss in confidence.* |
| **confidential / confidentiality** | **private or secret**  
*The report was confidential. The employers declared that this information was a matter of confidentiality and must therefore not be disclosed to anyone outside of the meeting.* |
SIMILARITIES and DIFFERENCES

In EWC meetings or activities there will be occasions when:

➢ two plans / schemes are compared or contrasted
➢ conditions in different countries may be compared or contrasted
➢ opinions and ideas may be compared

Here is a brief list of vocabulary useful for these comparisons and contrasts:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>alike</th>
<th>not alike</th>
<th>balancing each side</th>
<th>reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>similar (to)</td>
<td>different (from)</td>
<td>on the one hand ..... on the other hand...</td>
<td>because</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dissimilar (to)</td>
<td></td>
<td>..... while .....</td>
<td>in that ....</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>on the contrary</td>
<td></td>
<td>whereas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>conversely</td>
<td></td>
<td>in comparison (with)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>unlike</td>
<td></td>
<td>in contrast (to)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>by way of contrast</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Read the following newspaper article and then fill in the gaps in the sentences below, which refer to the contents of this article, with words / expressions from the list above.

NOW THE GOOD NEWS IS OUT: EUROPE IS WORKING VERY WELL

Europe is growing again, after several years of gloom. What is more, it may grow even faster next year. The European Commission’s economic report this week is an astonishing compilation of good news, even if the bald figures are modest.

The improvement in Germany, the EU’s giant economy, that affects the fortunes of all the others, appears to owe most to its businesses’ belated fear of competition from Eastern Europe and China.

But the EU can be credited with providing some of that incentive, by bringing in the eight new members from the east and spurring competition. They are the fastest-growing economies within the EU - partly because of massive investment from Brussels - .and also among the most competitive.
European Works Councils

The headline figure of the spring report is that the EU will grow at 2.3% this year. That is 0.2% better than the Commission reckoned in the autumn, and much faster than the 1.6% the region achieved last year.

The most important assumption underpinning that forecast is that Germany continues to improve and that Britain continues to grow steadily. More ambitiously, the report argues that France, where growth slumped last year to 1.4%, will pick up strongly this year and next.

The EU has had outside help in making this turnaround. The strength of the US economy has boosted demand for exports; so has the weakness of the dollar against the Euro. The report credits the newcomers in 2004 - the eastern eight plus Cyprus and Malta - with vigorous investment, particularly in equipment, although it notes some worries about demand at home.

© The Times, London, 2006

1. __________ the gloomy situation of the past few years, the EU economy is now growing again.
2. Eastern Europe is __________ China __________ it seems to represent serious competition to the EU.
3. According to the spring report, the EU is now expected to grow at 2.3% this year __________ the autumn forecast for 2006 was only 2.1%.
4. Germany is __________ to Britain __________ the economy is continuing to improve steadily.
5. __________ France’s growth slumped heavily last year, this year, __________, it is expected to pick up strongly.
6. __________, the ten new countries (2004) have benefited from heavy EU investment, particularly in equipment, but, __________ they seem to have suffered from a fall in demand at home.

Note: You will find more useful vocabulary on comparisons in statistics, graphs etc. in Working with Language 3 in this unit, as well as in the Level 3 unit Working Women, and in the Level 4 unit Workers of the World.

Working with Language 1
European Works Councils

Terms of an EWC Agreement

1. Prepare a short report under the following headings about the terms of your EWC Agreement or any other you are familiar with.

[This activity is more suitable for EWC delegates]

1. The Agreement
   When was the Agreement first signed?
   Has it been renewed/renegotiated (and if so when?)

2. Duration
   How long does your Agreement run for?

3. Composition
   How many delegates are entitled to attend meetings?
   How many management representatives attend?

4. Frequency of meetings
   How often are the following meetings held:
   - the full EWC
   - the Steering Group/Select Committee

5. Location of meetings
   Where are the EWC meetings held?

6. Agenda
   How is the Agenda drawn up and by whom?

7. Facilities
   What facilities are provided for your meetings (e.g. translators; secretarial help)

8. Pre-meetings
   What arrangements are there for a pre-meeting of delegates?

9. Confidentiality
   What sort of subjects, if any, are confidential?

10. Any other relevant information
    (e.g. other meetings; training seminars)
European Works Councils

2 Exchange reports with other members of the group and prepare a matrix to show the results from items (a) – (e) below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Colleagues</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>D</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Dates Agreements signed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Dates renewed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Duration of Agreements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Frequency of full meetings</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. Frequency of steering group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Discuss items (a) – (e) and prepare a joint report on your findings.

Study Box 2

Frequency: some useful expressions

- In every case,....
- In some cases,...
- One or two EWCs.....
- The normal situation was that.....
- In general, every EWC ...
- Exceptionally, EWC X...

Note: see also Working with Language 1: Similarities and Differences
European Works Councils

Working with speaking 2

Communicating at work

A Where and when do you meet to communicate about work?

Examine the choices offered in the box below and add any others that may be relevant to your situation. List the five most important occasions/situations in your case and discuss and compare your list with a partner.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>one-to one meetings</th>
<th>mass meetings</th>
<th>in the corridor</th>
<th>sub-committee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>workshops</td>
<td>training courses</td>
<td>seminars</td>
<td>interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>steering/select committee</td>
<td>ad hoc committee</td>
<td>annual meeting</td>
<td>congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>executive committee</td>
<td>preparatory meeting</td>
<td>coffee breaks</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B The topics we talk about

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EWC delegates often say that the key issues for them are:</th>
<th>Trade union representatives often say that the key issues for them are:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>□ training</td>
<td>□ pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ equal opportunities</td>
<td>□ working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ health and safety</td>
<td>□ working time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ outsourcing</td>
<td>□ health and safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□ relocations</td>
<td>□ redundancies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

1. **What do you understand by these different headings?**

2. **Use some of the expressions below to say how some of these issues are treated at meetings you attend**

   **For example:**
   - I **concentrate on** health and safety issues (4)
   - We discuss pay **over and over again** (6)
   - They **waste time** on outsourcing (11)

1. prioritise .................
2. give most importance to ...............  
3. take very seriously the question of ...............  
4. concentrate on ...............  
5. focus on ...............  
6. discuss ............... over and over again  
7. go round in circles about ...............  
8. never get round to ...............  
9. neglect ...............  
10. ignore the question of ...............  
11. waste time on ...............  

3. **Use some of the adverbs of frequency below to say which issues are least/most frequently discussed at the meetings you attend?**

   **For example:**
   - We **rarely** talk about relocations (2)
   - We **often** discuss equal opportunities (6)

1. not at all/never
2. rarely
3. seldom
4. occasionally/from time to time
5. sometimes
6. often
7. generally/usually
8. always/all the time
C How do you report back or give feedback to your colleagues about the meetings you attend?

*Add to this list any other means you use and discuss their use and the problems of communications within your organisations.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>more meetings</th>
<th>emails</th>
<th>leaflets</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>telephone calls</td>
<td>faxes</td>
<td>notice-boards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minutes</td>
<td>newsletters</td>
<td>website</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>written reports</td>
<td>posters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*How do you report back the meetings you attend?*
Business organisation

There are many different types of business organisation ranging from small sole-traders to huge multinationals. Partnerships are common in certain professions (e.g. medicine and law) and co-operatives are found in some sectors (e.g. agriculture). Some companies founded, for example, by family members prefer to remain as private companies while other businesses in order to expand float their shares on the stock market and become public companies. These should not be confused with public sector companies or state-owned enterprises.

1 In pairs, consider these questions:

- Are there any other forms of business organisation that you are familiar with?
- What is the common form of business organisation in your country?
- What type of organisation do you work for?

2 What words do you relate to the word company?

Complete the mind-map below with words that form part of a word-family with company. Some examples are given to start with. Then compare your list with a partner and compile a joint list.

[See Introductory Unit, Vocabulary, section B for more on using mind-maps]
3. Look at these three diagrams of types of company structure, and match one of the descriptions below with each:

![Diagrams A, B, C]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TRANSNATIONAL</td>
<td>Network of interlinked foreign subsidiaries, many of them having a role beyond their own region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>INTERNATIONAL</td>
<td>Dominant parent company – no links between foreign subsidiaries except through company headquarters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MULTINATIONAL</td>
<td>International federation of national companies, working for their own national markets.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Working with the European works Council, ETUCO/AFETT 1999

EWC members only:

Is your company an international, transnational, or multinational company?

4. Complete the gap in the following sentences with an appropriate word from the box below.

- acquisitions, asset stripping, conglomerates, spin-off
- restructuring, downsize, over-capacity, buy-out
- shareholders, mergers, alliance, stake
- takeover, bid, competition
Large multinational companies are often formed as a result of (1) _______________ between different companies. Companies agree to amalgamate their interests. Sometimes groups expand in size and power because they make a (2) _______________ for the shares of other companies. Such purchases or (3) _______________ may be agreed between the companies or it may result in a hostile (4) _______________ when Company X persuades the major (5) _______________ in Company Y to sell it their (6) _______________ in the company. Sometimes this is in order to obtain economies of scale or to eliminate (7) _______________ but sometimes it is in order to gain and dispose of the assets that belong to another company. This is referred to as (8) _______________. Some companies agree to work with other companies in the form of an (9) _______________ for a specific project. This sometimes takes the form of a joint-venture.

Some very large companies are engaged in diverse business activities, for example, in construction; information technology; shipbuilding and chemicals. These companies are called (10) _______________. Often when economic circumstances change, these companies decide to (11) _______________. They say they have (12) _______________. This may result in a de-merger or (13) _______________ when one or more of the subsidiaries is disposed of or sold to another company.

Sometimes when a closure is threatened, the existing management may purchase the company’s shares themselves in a management (14) _______________. Unfortunately these processes often lead to a reduction in the level of employment as a result of what management – speak refers to as: rationalisation, re-engineering or (15) _______________.
5.1 Explain and comment on the following company news items:

**CONSUMER GOODS ▲ 0.01%**
- Shares in Revlon plunged nearly 35 per cent after the cosmetics company said that earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation and amortisation could fall below 2005 levels this year because of weaker-than-expected sales growth.
- Hornby, the Scalextric maker, said that its pre-tax profit rose 8 per cent to £8.2 million in the year to March, despite a 2 per cent fall in sales.

**INDUSTRIALS ▲ 1.6%**
- The European Commission gave conditional approval to Mittal Steel's attempt to buy rival steelmaker Arcelor. Arcelor confirmed that it had received a business plan from Mittal outlining its intentions.
- Akzo Nobel, the Dutch chemicals group, has agreed to sell its 94.2 per cent stake in Salt Asia Holdings, a salt producer, to Mitsui & Co, of Japan, in an €80 million (£54.9 million) deal.

**RETAILING ▲ 0.49%**
- New Look, the fashion chain, is to more than double its rate of expansion this year before a possible flotation next year.
- Sales of televisions rose 80 per cent in the week to May 27 as fans prepare for the football World Cup, according to figures from Gfk, the market researcher.

**HEALTH ▼ 0.16%**
- GlaxoSmithKline, (GSK) the pharmaceutical group, is reportedly planning to offer almost $16 billion dollars (£8.5 billion) for the over-the-counter drugs business of its American rival Pfizer. A deal would make GSK the world’s biggest producer of non-prescription drugs and the second-largest prescription drugs supplier.
Abbot Group, the biggest offshore drilling contractor in the North Sea, has secured more than 90 per cent of the shares in Songa Drilling, of Norway.

Martin St Quinton, the chief executive of Azzurri, received a £16 million payout after selling the telecoms business to PPM Capital, the private equity unit of Prudential, the insurer, for £182.5 million.

KPN, the Dutch telecoms giant, has acquired the Dutch business of Demon, the internet service provider owned by Thus, for £47 million. KPN said that the business would strengthen its position in the Dutch broadband market.

Workers at General Motors’ Portuguese assembly plant have refused to accept pay cuts to save the factory from closure and rejected the carmaker's assertion that production at Azambuja costs more than other centres.

Navistar International, the American truckmaker mired in accounting problems, said that an internal investigation into one of the central issues identified by its former auditor had found no evidence of fraud.

Nissan has agreed to expand an alliance with Suzuki in mini-vehicles as the second-biggest carmaker in Japan looks to reinvigorate sluggish domestic sales.

BAA shareholders held on to their shares in the airports’ operator as Ferrovial appeared to make an unsuccessful raid on the company. According to market rumours, Ferrovial tried to buy 150 million shares in BAA for 900p each, but ended up with just over 60 million.

5.2 Compile a list of positive (e.g. double, reinvigorate) and negative (e.g. fall, fraud) terms used in these reports.
Company policy on employment issues is always of interest to trade union reps and EWC delegates.

The business section of a UK national weekly newspaper regularly publishes problems that readers send in about work-related issues, and a professional expert replies with an explanation based on the statutory situation.*

1 Below are some of the headlines and problems.

Try to match the headlines with the problems:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEADLINE</th>
<th>PROBLEM ( A-F )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

Headlines

1. Staff can’t be made to retire before 65

2. Recruits on probation have usual staff rights

3. Sacking during maternity leave

4. Crack-down on office use of the internet

5. Ring the changes after consultation

6. Standing up to workers who play the race card

Problems

A. There has been wide-spread abuse of the company’s Internet and e-mail facilities. We wish to curb this and introduce guidelines in our contracts of employment. How should we go about this?

B. We wish to extend working hours to cover extra demands on the business. In exchange for this, we will give staff extra holiday. Can we dismiss employees who do not accept these changes?

C. Our company has a retirement age of 60. I know that new legislation will raise the retirement age to 65. Will this apply to one of our employees who reaches 60 in September?

D. I have warned an employee about his poor performance but he believes that the warning was issued because of his race. He is using discrimination as an excuse and I’m frustrated that there is little I can do.

E. We have two probationary employees who, we fear, may not be suitable for our business. Do these workers have any rights?

F. One of my employees is on maternity leave. She has been absent for five months and I’m not sure if she’s coming back. She has called in saying she was depressed, and has a sick note for a further four weeks off work. She has been with me for two years and in that time has had two verbal warnings about her performance. Can I get rid of her?

© The Times, London, 2004-6
2. Work in pairs or small groups.

Take one of these problems:

a. Decide what solution you would propose, based on the statutory employment laws of your country.
b. Check your conclusion with the advice offered by the British management expert (see text in Study Guide). Do you agree with it?
c. Report back to the other members of the group on your proposed solution to the problem you have discussed.

3. Find a word/words in the texts above on work problems meaning the same as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. laws</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. (to) limit</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. spoken</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. (to) make longer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. on test / trial (adj.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. to affect</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. extensive</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. services, equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. (tele)phoned</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. to dismiss</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Financial terminology

Complete the sentences below with an appropriate word from the box.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>currency</th>
<th>earnings</th>
<th>parent company</th>
<th>results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>consolidated</td>
<td>employee</td>
<td>turnover</td>
<td>balance sheet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>costs</td>
<td>assets</td>
<td>liabilities</td>
<td>retained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>subsidiaries</td>
<td>group</td>
<td>cash flow</td>
<td>loss</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A multinational company usually consists of a (1) __________ ________ and a number of (2) __________. Taken together these are called the (3) __________.

While each individual company or business unit will keep its own financial records there will also be ones for the group as a whole. These are of most interest to EWC delegates and are known as group accounts or (4)_________ accounts.

The financial situation of an enterprise at a particular point in time (e.g. the end of the financial year) is shown on the (5) __________.

The profit and loss account (or statement of (6) __________ or income statement) shows how the profit or loss of an enterprise has been arrived at for a particular period of time.

The (7) __________ statement shows how an enterprise’s activities are reflected in the form of cash flowing into and out of the entity over a particular period of time.

Among an enterprise’s (8) __________ are cash, stock (or inventories), property and equipment.
(9) _________ include money borrowed from third parties and taxes payable to the government.

It is always important to consider the (10) _________ in which the statements are expressed before making any comparisons.

Reserves consist of profits that the company does not distribute to its shareholders. These are (11) _________ earnings.

The amount of money that a company receives from sales in a particular period is called its (12) _________ or revenue or sales.

(13) _________ are what the company incurs in producing goods or services and in running the business.

(14) _________ costs show the amounts that the company has paid for labour.

The amount of profit a company makes after deducting taxes is called net profit, net income or net earnings or net (15) _________.

However, if costs exceed sales, a company makes a (16) _________ for a particular period.

2 Comment on the meaning and implications of the following newspapers reports:

There are indications of weaker than expected sales growth

Shares plunged nearly 35% after it was announced that earnings were expected to fall below 2005 levels

Pre-tax profits rose 8% despite a 2% fall in profits

The group is to slash overheads by 20% after record losses
The soft-drinks group could soon be on the receiving end of a takeover bid

The interim results disappointed market analysts

The struggling construction firm will this week unveil a turn round plan

The group is likely to engage in a cost-cutting exercise

The proceeds of the sale of the subsidiary will be used to reduce bank debt

The profitability of the project was questioned by potential investors

Further investment has been postponed because of soaring labour and material costs

A substantial hike in dividend payments has been announced

After a significant decline in the first five months profits are likely to fall short of full-year forecasts

The CEO received a 16m Euro payout after selling the IT unit

Rumours of a bid triggered a rise in the share price
REPORTING ON YOUR ORGANISATION

-responding to a request for information

You will be attending a plenary meeting next Friday morning and each delegate has been asked to circulate a brief written report in English on his / her organisation at this meeting.

Below you will find a pro-forma listing different headings which will help you in your preparation.

Make brief notes for each section.

1. ORGANISATION
2. YOUR NAME
3. LOCATION
   Town: Country:
4. Major changes in number of employees:
5. Major changes in incoming orders:
6. Information on economic problems:
   (acquisitions / disposals, outsourcing etc.)
7. Health & Safety issues:
   (general; attitude of management; training)
8. Work-related accidents:
   (numbers, brief description of any major accidents)
9. Changes in working hours or shift systems:
10. Changes in representation:
    (Trade Union, EWC etc)
11. Changes in management:
12. Any other important information about your organisation:
European Works Councils

2. There will be time allocated during the meeting for all delegates’ reports to be circulated for the others to read and to make written comments on the sheet of paper attached to each report.

**These comments could be:**

- questions
- requests for further information / clarification on some points
- a description of similar situations
- suggesting solutions
- opinions

*Each delegate can then give a spoken résumé of his / her own report and a brief response to the comments on it.*
EU social partners issue joint statement on EWCs

1. Who are the ‘social partners’?

2. On many occasions we need to read documents rapidly in order to find specific information.
   
   Find the following information from the EWC case studies table:
   
   1. What other titles for EWC-style consultative bodies are found in these case studies?
   2. In which company did the existence of an EWC assist in the restructuring process and why may this have presented difficulties?
   3. Which is the company where the problems of operating an EWC are acknowledged and why was this so?
   4. In which company did the EWC help to develop a group culture and why was this important?

3. You are asked to present a report to your colleagues on the lessons contained in the joint statement below.

   Indicate how you would explain each point, with particular regard to rephrasing the expressions in bold. (The task could be divided among the group).

EU social partners issue joint statement on EWCs

Background

In September and October 2004, the social partners held two seminars to discuss case studies of how EWCs are operating, with a view to identifying best practice. Its summary assessments of the nine cases are set out in the table below.
### European Works Councils

The EWC case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORTIS</strong></td>
<td>Banking and insurance</td>
<td>'The EWC played a useful role [in helping to integrate] the different entities in the Fortis group, in which 75% of the total workforce is based in Belgium and the Netherlands and in which diverse professional and industrial relations cultures coexist.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lafarge</strong></td>
<td>Construction materials</td>
<td>'Lafarge is present in 75 countries, and employs 75,000 employees on more than 2,100 sites. In a context of very rapid internationalisation of the group’s activities, the EWC proved useful to communicate on the group’s strategy and to develop a group culture.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>EDF</strong></td>
<td>Energy</td>
<td>'EDF was originally a public company in a monopoly situation in France, which has rapidly grown in recent years and now functions as an international group. The EWC was established fairly recently and evolved positively, allowing for good communication between management and workers without a marked French hegemony, despite the weight of French operations in the group.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ericsson</strong></td>
<td>Telecommunications</td>
<td>'Faced with a telecoms market which ran into severe problems, Ericsson embarked on a restructuring and cost-cutting programme to ensure its long term future in 2001. The EWC was instrumental in this process.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Carrefour</strong></td>
<td>Retail/wholesale</td>
<td>'The good climate of cooperation in the European Committee on Information and Consultation helped the group [in] realising strategic business objectives and reinforcing its competitiveness.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unilever</strong></td>
<td>Food, home care and personal care</td>
<td>'The establishment of an EWC has been a gradual process in Unilever. Through the EWC, management and workers have developed information and dialogue at European level, based on mutual trust.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Henkel</strong></td>
<td>Home care, personal care and adhesives, sealants and surface treatments</td>
<td>'The relationship and cooperation between the European Employee Council and Henkel’s management is seen as a dynamic process involving learning and improving on a permanent basis. The European Employee Council agreement provides a broad basis as a framework to find practical solutions to deal with mutual problems.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Note</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GKN</td>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>'GKN has very diversified portfolio of products and there is a big contrast between production and services divisions. The experience of their European Forum is positive but illustrates the complexity of running an EWC and ensuring a real sense of ownership of the EWC by the whole workforce.'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EDS</td>
<td>IT applications and business process services</td>
<td>'EDS has integrated the EWC at the heart of its business strategy and is developing a highly interactive way of operating in its EWC.'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The joint statement

Following the seminars, the Social Dialogue Committee appointed a drafting group to draw lessons from the case studies examined. The result of the work done by this group was a joint text, *Lessons learned on European Works Councils*, which was approved by the Social Dialogue Committee on 1 March 2005. The main points it highlights are that:

1. EWCs 'can help management and workers to build a corporate culture and adapt to change in fast-evolving transnational companies' ;
2. the establishment of 'a climate of mutual trust' between management and workers' representatives in the EWC is important for its effective functioning;
3. investing in language as well as technical training helps to 'optimise' the functioning of the EWC;
4. finding ways of reconciling different national industrial relations practices and addressing an increasingly diverse workforce is a 'constant challenge' ;
5. all the case studies demonstrated that ensuring a real sense of ownership of the EWC by the whole workforce was a 'considerable challenge' ;
6. some companies seeking to enlarge their EWC have encountered difficulties in identifying worker representatives in the new Member States;
7. managing multiple layers of information and consultation can sometimes be very complex; and
8. all the case studies underlined that the effective functioning of EWCs is a 'learning and evolving process' requiring 'fine tuning over the years'

Source: EFILWC  Mark Hall, 31-05-2005
European Works Councils and social responsibility

You are going to listen to an interview with Doug Miller,

Multinationals Co-ordinator, International Tailor, Garment and Leather Workers’ Federation (ITGLWF) /Northumbria University.

Stage 1 (before listening)

Consider these three questions:

1. What do you understand by the terms globalisation and outsourcing?
2. What are the links between the two and can you give any examples?
3. To what extent do you think these issues are relevant to European Works Councils?

Stage 2

Now listen to the interview and answer the following questions:

1. Why does Doug suggest that his sector is one of the most globalised industrialised sectors in the world?
2. What sort of conditions do workers suffer from in globalised companies?
3. What reasons does he give for some of their problems?
4. What does he see as an ‘exciting opportunity for EWCs’?
5. What is his criticism of many EWCs?

Stage 3

Consider the following questions:

Do you think his reservations about EWCs are justified?
Do you think EWCs should be involved to the extent he suggests?
**Stage 4**

*Create sentences to show the meaning of the following terms used in the interview (if necessary consult the transcript in the Study Guide).*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. brand owners</th>
<th>6. corporate social responsibility</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. NGOs</td>
<td>7. code of conduct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. supply chain</td>
<td>8. violations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. tight deadlines</td>
<td>9. state of the nation report</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. bridgehead</td>
<td>10. talking shop</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

One of the most globalised industrialised sectors in the world
Working with video 1

Understanding modern business jargon
-an introduction to ‘management-speak’

This is an extract from a BBC TV programme Balderdash and Pifflie (Understanding management–speak) presented by Ian Hislop, Editor of Private Eye, a satirical UK magazine broadcast by BBC2 on January 9, 2006. It is a description of expressions and vocabulary (jargon) often used by managers and others in a work context. It could be useful for you in meetings and negotiations with management to understand some of these terms. You will also come across this type of language in newspapers, especially in headlines. Many of these phrases are quite amusing such as ‘the fat man in the canoe’ (= the boss) and sometimes the meaning is not at all clear to the uninitiated!

Watch the video clip right through, then watch it again and answer the questions or complete the phrase.

Some of the text is reproduced below to help you follow.

“Britain is no longer a nation of shopkeepers; now it’s a nation of managers”

1. What is the “new” expression for:
   a. a ticket collector (for the bus, train)? ........................................
   b. a bin-man (= refuse collector)? ........................................
   c. a pigeon shooter [getting rid of pigeons]? ............................

2. What does one call a special language?
   .............................................................................................

This is the sort of language one hears in the TV comedy series The Office. But it isn’t new. George Orwell writes about this in his book 1984 (written in 1949) and called it New Speak. ‘Management-speak’ is a direct descendant.
3. How to sugar the linguistic pill = (a) ..............................................:

- Rule 1: a great noun can make a better verb
  e.g.: to offer incentives > to incentivise
- Rule 2: never use 1 word when 2 will do --- use an adverb
  e.g.: I must pro-actively incentivise
- Rule 3: don’t be active if you can be passive
  e.g. : The team must be pro-actively incentivised
- Rule 4: everyone’s a stakeholder (b) = ....................................... now
  e.g. : In accordance with best practice for our stakeholders the team
  must be pro-actively incentivised in order to allow the company to
  undergo a resizing exercise
  (c) What does this mean? ...............................................................!
- Rule 5: bury bad news

4. “Management-speak is not recent. It was used in management
consultancy where an analysis of a company’s activities was carried
out, with recommendations for improvements.”

- in 1933 Marvin Bower changed McKinsey Management Engineering
  (blue-collar image) to McKinsey Management Consultancy
  (boardroom image)
- he developed a lexicon, making standard words in his firm’s activities
  sound more up-market.

**Fill in the gaps below:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>formerly</th>
<th>now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. industry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. customer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. job</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. employees</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. rules</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

5 “Now, in order to get on (=_____________), you must learn it like a foreign language but, unlike most languages, you are not aiming to be understood! “

Examples:
- I am pioneering a whole system approach
- I’m embedding a new progressive consensus
- I recommend synchronised administrative flexibility

It’s not concision you want but confusion!

6 "This jargon is now used not just in business but also in politics....”

‘to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable and to give the appearance of solidity to pure wind.’ (George Orwell 1956)

7 Listen to Prime Minister Tony Blair (Education & Employment Question Time, House of Commons, 28/10/99):

“The whole point of them is actually to promote best practice and to roll them out and we are already encouraging other units of delivery to adopt aspects of the trailblazer approach as they’re proved to be successful into their own gateways. And, of course, the whole point of trailblazers is about developing the kind of soft skills in young people that employers tell us that they want to see -----”

Question: What does he mean?
Answer: It’s not clear at all! It’s management-speak!

Note: In Working with words 3 you will find four short exercises Buzz words at work. These will introduce you to some more of this type of jargon.
Buzz words at work

Here is some vocabulary you might hear used by management at EWC meetings when they provide information about their organisations. You may also come across these expressions in newspaper articles.

1. What do these words mean?

1. a big cheese
2. to pass the buck
3. OTT
4. to have a bad hair day
5. a road-map
6. a ball-park figure
7. to go pear-shaped
8. to drill down into
9. to go ape
10. a hero-to-zero

Match the words above to the explanations below:

a) a rough estimate
b) to blame someone else
c) to examine closely
d) excessive, exaggerated
e) to go wrong
f) a plan
g) to lose one’s temper
h) to have a not very good day
i) someone formerly successful, now a failure
j) an important person, a manager
European Works Councils

2  Guess the meanings and use these words in the sentences below, replacing the word(s) in bold. You may need to adapt them slightly.

1. a golden hand-shake  
2. to go down the tube  
3. a scam  
4. to draw the line under  
5. to have some face-time (with)  
6. a dry run  
7. to grasp the nettle  
8. it's got legs  
9. to bring up to speed  
10. a crony, a mate

a. After a trial testing, it was decided that the new project would be successful.

b. When the HR manager retired, he was given a very large lump sum.

c. The chairman said he would inform the committee of the latest developments and then they would tackle the difficult problem in order to stop the firm failing.

d. At work he told his friends that he had had a phone call to say he had won the lottery but it turned out to be a fraud.

e. He arranged to meet the shop-steward in order to put an end to the question.
3 **Match the words on the left to the definitions (a-j) on the right.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. movers and shakers</th>
<th>a. person who reveals a malpractice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. to ring-fence</td>
<td>b. to lie, tell lies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. a whistleblower</td>
<td>c. everyone to appear / behave in agreement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. to sing from the same song-sheet</td>
<td>d. to carry out a tough policy, to be merciless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. to call the shots</td>
<td>e. dynamic people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. to be economical with the truth</td>
<td>f. involved, part of the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. to take no prisoners</td>
<td>g. to designate (money/ a job for a particular purpose / person or persons)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. brainstorming session</td>
<td>h. to be the decision-maker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. in the loop</td>
<td>i. to finance, pay for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. to bankroll</td>
<td>j. a meeting for sharing useful &amp; new ideas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

4 Try to work out what these words mean and then use them in the sentences below, substituting them for the words in bold. You may need to adapt them slightly, for example, change the verb tense. Write your new version below each of the sentences below.

1. to be given gardening leave 6. a think-tank
2. to float my boat 7. to go belly up
3. a spin-doctor 8. gobbledygook
4. to cut to the chase 9. to get our ducks in a row
5. to park (an issue) 10. an exercise in box-ticking

1. I’ve been appointed to be on a panel of experts and the new project to evaluate really interests me.

2. Let’s move directly to discuss the key issue and then, after half-an-hour, put it aside.

3. PR people (= Public Relations) often talk a lot of nonsense.

4. A senior member of staff announced he was leaving to join a competitor so he was immediately sent home on full pay instead of working his notice. There was concern that he might pass on information which could cause the company to fail totally.

5. On the one hand we could just do the minimum officially required but, on the other hand, we could make an effort and really work together.
Using expressions of time

Question: What time is it? / What’s the time? / What time do you make it?

Answer: It’s 8 minutes past 10

Here is one hour in detail:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Expression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>10 o’clock, 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:02</td>
<td>2 minutes past 10, ten O (oh) 2. (The same pattern up to 10.30 for minutes not a multiple of 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:05</td>
<td>5 past 10, ten O (oh) 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:10</td>
<td>10 past 10, 10.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15</td>
<td>(a) quarter past 10, 10.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:20</td>
<td>20 past 10, 10.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25</td>
<td>25 past 10, 10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30</td>
<td>half past 10, 10.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:31</td>
<td>29 minutes to 11, 10.31         (The same pattern up to 11h for minutes not a multiple of 5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35</td>
<td>25 to 11, 10.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:40</td>
<td>20 to 11, 10.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45</td>
<td>(a) quarter to 11, 10.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:50</td>
<td>10 to 11, 10.50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:55</td>
<td>5 to 11, 10.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00</td>
<td>11 o’clock, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00</td>
<td>12 o’clock (day), midday, noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12 o’clock (night), midnight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.01 (night) to 12 noon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in the morning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>12.01 (day) to 12 midnight</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The 24 hour clock is used mainly for travel timetables (plane, train, bus) and only the hour and minutes are used / spoken, for example:**

*The train leaves at 21.45*

1. **Say the time for the different times in the box below. Practise with a partner.**

**Question:** What time is it? or What’s the time? or What time do you make it?

**Answer:** It’s ________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td>3.15 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td>9.35 am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c.</td>
<td>17.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d.</td>
<td>7.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e.</td>
<td>12.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f.</td>
<td>2.59 pm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g.</td>
<td>1.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h.</td>
<td>19.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.</td>
<td>6.45 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# PREPOSITIONS in TIME EXPRESSIONS

## General guidelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>hour</th>
<th>at</th>
<th>at 6.30, at midday</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>part of day, month, season, year</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>in the morning (but at night), in May, in summer, in 2005</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>day, date, special days</td>
<td>on</td>
<td>on Monday, on Sunday morning, on April (the )10th, on his birthday, on their anniversary, on Christmas Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>major events in the year</td>
<td>at</td>
<td>at Christmas, at Easter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no preposition</td>
<td></td>
<td>today, yesterday, tomorrow, last year, next Friday, every / each month, some days, this morning/week etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NB: tonight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other TIME prepositions</td>
<td>for</td>
<td>duration of action / activity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>I’ve worked here for 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>since</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>in</td>
<td>time action took / within which action will happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>We’ll arrive in ten minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>before</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>during</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>after</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>until</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ago</td>
<td>length of time in the past e.g. a year ago, three weeks ago</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**also:** The meeting was **at** 2 pm.
- he arrived **in** time (i.e. before the meeting)
- he arrived **on** time (i.e. at 2pm)
2. Fill in the gaps in these sentences with a preposition IF one is necessary. If there is no preposition, put X.

1. The next meeting will be ______ Monday ______ 11 am.

2. _____ last month the auditors came

3. I completed the financial report _____ four days

4. We’re going out to the cinema ______ this evening

5. We often go to the pub ______ the evening

6. The English course is _____ Thursday evening, starting _____ 6 pm and lasting _____ two hours.

7. ______ yesterday there was a union meeting ______ the morning which lasted ______ 11.30.

8. _____ summer the plant shuts down ______ two weeks and again ______ Christmas ______ four days.

9. The regional TU rep, who was elected ______ this week, will visit our plant ______ June 12th ______ 2 o’clock ______ the afternoon and stay ________ three hours.

10. The last accident happened three weeks ______, _____ 3.30 ______ the morning.

More TIME expressions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a fortnight ago</th>
<th>2 centuries ago</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a week on Tuesday</td>
<td>one year from now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the day before yesterday</td>
<td>tomorrow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>two months ahead</td>
<td>Sunday after next</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>last year</td>
<td>the weekend before last</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in 3 days’ time</td>
<td>next Monday</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Today it is **Wednesday 14 June, 2006** (see calendar above).

What relation to the date above do the following days / dates / years have?

*Select from the phrases in the list above the June calendar.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example: 2005</th>
<th>= last year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. 3 &amp; 4 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. June 1806</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. August 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. 12 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. 31 May 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. 25 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. 17 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. 27 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. 19 June 2006</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. 14 June 2007</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. 2005</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12. What is the date of the day in the list not mentioned so far?
European Works Councils

**Emails and text messages (SMS)**

**A. Emails**

These informal messages have become a major means of communication. Email is particularly useful for members of EWCs at different plants and in different countries wishing to keep in touch about the latest developments in their company. They are quick and easy to send, and also convenient to reply to and/or to forward to third parties.

1. **Discuss the following questions with a partner:**

   - How often do you open your mail box?
   - How often do you send/receive messages?
   - Do you forward, save or delete your messages?
   - Do you download many attachments?
   - How do you guard against viruses?

2. There are, however, some drawbacks!

   Read the following excerpt from an item on the TUC’s Worksmart website, and discuss the questions that follow.

   'Users' - you can spot them a mile off. The nervous twitches, the spaced-out stare and the willingness to do anything to get their next fix. Yes, you've guessed it, we're talking about e-mail.

   Researchers from King's College have found that e-mail can have a drug-like effect on desk-bound workers, making them lethargic, unable to focus, and temporarily slashing IQ* by 10 points - more than the average 4 point drop associated with cannabis use.
In the survey for IT firm Hewlett-Packard, volunteers were studied as e-mails on different topics bombarded their inboxes. Juggling the new competing demands at the same time caused their brains to switch direction over and over again. Coupling this with the strain of their existing workloads caused their productivity to plummet. Over the course of a hectic day at work, they became as tired as if they'd missed a whole night's sleep.

The most damage was done, according to the survey, by the almost complete lack of discipline in handling emails. Dr Wilson and his colleagues found a compulsion to reply to each new message, leading to constant changes of direction which inevitably tired and slowed down the brain.

*IQ = Intelligence Quota a standard test applied to measure intelligence
Source: Worksmart April 2005

Do you agree with the opinions expressed in the above text?

What has been your experience of emails?

Have you come across examples of harassment by email?

What is your email address?

Note how we say the following symbols and abbreviations:

@ = at . = dot
/ = forward slash \ = back slash
__ = underscore or underline - = dash

co, com and org are pronounced as single words

For website addresses, www. is pronounced double u double u double u dot

The prefix http:// is rarely, if ever spoken, but would be pronounced http (the alphabetical letters) – colon - double (forward) slash

2 Practise saying these addresses to the other members of your group:

http://education.etui-rehs.org/etuco/en/resources/
Now tell other members of the group your email address and organisation website (or invent one!) and then check their written versions for accuracy

Style
There are no hard and fast rules but certain styles seem to be emerging although there is considerable overlap between them:

a. When you are writing to someone you know well (family, friends, close colleagues), the style is certainly informal, short and simple.

Greetings such as Hi and Hello (with or without the first name of the person) and closing word such as cheers, see you, love, atb (all the best) are commonly used.

b. When writing to acquaintances and less well-known colleagues, to play safe, it is more usual to use first names often preceded by the letter-writing introductory word Dear (e.g. Dear Colleague(s); Dear Eva). These messages often close with expressions such as Best wishes or Kindest regards.

c. When writing to people personally unknown to you, it is not uncommon to revert to more formal letter-style language opening with Dear (e.g. Dear Colleague, Dear Jane Harrison) or To whom it may concern and closing with Best wishes...Kindest regards.

Once good contact is established you can then move to style b).

However, if you are really not sure then perhaps you should revert to letter writing!

Note that when messages are coming back and forwards quickly it is usual to omit these greetings and often the closing formulae.

B. Text messages or SMS (short message service)

The use of mobile phones for sending text messages (texting) has become increasing used as a rapid and cheap method of communication. It has led to the establishment of a language of its own, particularly among the younger generation. This “language” consists largely of abbreviations and ‘emoticons’ or symbols.

The abbreviations often combine letters and numbers

e.g. L8 = late; L8R= later; No1 = no one
While this language is outside the scope of this Unit, some of the abbreviations are often used in e-mail messages:

**Examples of abbreviations used in text messages and emails:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>aka</td>
<td>also known as</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>asap</td>
<td>as soon as possible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>atb</td>
<td>all the best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bfn</td>
<td>bye for now</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cul8r</td>
<td>see you later</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fyi</td>
<td>for your information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand</td>
<td>have a nice day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>kit</td>
<td>keep in touch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>msg</td>
<td>message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pdq</td>
<td>pretty damn quick</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pls</td>
<td>please</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thx</td>
<td>thanks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wknd</td>
<td>weekend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iow</td>
<td>in other words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Can you add any more examples? How does this apply in your own language?*

**Role-play**

*Work in 4-6 groups depending on number of participants, with one group (Group X) acting as the Steering Group for the EWC and the other groups (Groups A-E) representing delegates in different countries*

**Stage 1**

The delegates receive the following email from the Steering Group:

Hi Colleagues

Looking for three days between the 9 & 15 April for the pre-meeting; meeting with management and debriefing meeting. Please let us know your availability during these dates.

Hope all OK with you

Truus, Claude, Monika, Bernd
European Works Councils

Stage 2a
The **delegates** send a reply with their availability as follows:

- Group A  10-15 April
- Group B  10-12 April
- Group C  9-11 April
- Group D  10-11 April
- Group E  9-14 April

Stage 2b
At the same time as the **delegates** are preparing their replies (2a above), the **Steering Group** (X) writes a message asking for suggestions for items for the agenda of the meeting.

Stage 3
This depends on the time available and the imagination of the participants! For example, the **Steering Group** can try to propose the most suitable date and see how the **delegates** respond; the **delegates** (A-E) can suggest agenda items and the **Steering Group** can react accordingly. **Delegates** can sound out the opinion of other delegates etc.

Working with writing 3
Meetings

1 Use the words in the box below to complete the following information about the procedure of formal meetings:

| motions | standing orders | turn | point |
| resolution | hand | agenda | adjournment |
| abstain | minutes | floor | amendments |
| items | matters arising | chair (x2) |

Formal meetings are run according to rules of procedure known as (1) ________. The (2) ________ is the list of (3) ________ that will be discussed at a meeting. It is important to have a record of decisions taken at previous meetings. These will be found in the (4) ________ of the meeting.

Participants at a meeting may wish to know what action has been taken with regard to decisions taken at the last meeting and that these can be raised as (5) ________.

Discussion is controlled by the (6) ________ and people are asked to speak through the (7) ________ who will indicate whose (8) ________ it is to speak or who has the (9) ________.

People need to remember to keep to the subject or the (10) ________.

Formal proposals are referred to as (11) ________. If a vote is needed then members will be asked to raise their (12) ________ to indicate if they are in favour (for) or against. Some people may be undecided and therefore (13) ________ from voting. When a motion is approved (carried or passed) by a meeting it becomes a (14) ________.

Sometimes people suggest (15) ________ or changes to the wording of proposals or documents that are under consideration. If there is a need for a break in the meeting (e.g. to consult an expert or to agree a negotiating position) then members can request an (16) ________.
Study Box

Some useful expressions for meetings

**To enter into a discussion**
- I’d like to say that........
- What I want to say is............
- I’d just like to add something (to what our colleague X has said)........
- It seems to me that....
- Personally I feel that.....

**To agree**
- I (wholeheartedly) agree with what X said and I........
- I’d like to support the suggestion (proposal, view, opinion) that we........
- I’m (strongly) in favour of............ing
- Our French colleague (Daniel) has made a good point and I think we should........

**To disagree**
- Yes, but surely we need to........
- I’m sorry but I can’t agree with the suggestion (made by X) that we......
- I don’t really think that is the answer to our problem
- I hear what X is saying but............... 

**To ask for clarification**
- Sorry, but could you explain that again please
- I’d be grateful if you could explain that again in more detail
- Are you saying that we......
- My understanding is that........

**To conclude**
- Bearing in mind what has been said, I think we should........
- Weighing up all the pros and cons, I think we should........
- Well that’s all I have to say (for now).
- There’s nothing more that I can add

*Can you add any other expressions under the above headings?*

You might like to try to use some of these expressions in the Communications activities at the end of this unit.
**TAKING PART IN MEETINGS**

Chairing and reporting

You will all be familiar with attending meetings – in your own organisation, in both your country and in other countries with delegates of different nationalities. The structure of the meeting may vary but there will be, of course, many similarities.

### 1 CULTURAL DIFFERENCES

Below you will find three statements on aspects of meetings.

*Mark with an X each statement that is generally true about your own country:*

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1a</td>
<td>Meetings start and end on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b</td>
<td>Meetings start 10 – 15 minutes late but end on time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c</td>
<td>Meetings start late and last longer than scheduled.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2a</td>
<td>Most respect is shown to the oldest person present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2b</td>
<td>Most respect is shown to the most senior person present.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c</td>
<td>Everyone is equal in a meeting.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3a</td>
<td>People don’t feel comfortable with jokes at meetings.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b</td>
<td>Humour and jokes help to make people more relaxed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c</td>
<td>There should be no humour or jokes at meetings.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Then discuss these and other aspects of meetings with a partner, such as smoking, using your mobile, etc.*

*How is it different in meetings with participants from different countries, and where there is more than one working language and you are working with interpreters?*
2 WHO SAYS WHAT?

*Decide which of the comments below is most likely to be made by the Chairperson (C) and which by a participant (P). In some cases it could be both.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>A Starting a meeting</strong></th>
<th><strong>C / P</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Good morning everyone. Welcome.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Please will everyone switch off their mobile.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Hans sends his apologies - he’ll be a bit late.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Sorry, I haven’t a copy of the agenda.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Now, the first item on the agenda is….</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>B Managing a meeting</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6. Does anyone have any questions before we move on?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I’d just like to ask a question about the minutes of the last meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Now, shall we move on to the next point?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. We’d like you to give us a few more details ...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>C Suggesting</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10. Could I make a suggestion?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I would like to invite Peter to speak.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. **CHAIRING and REPORTING**

You are in a meeting and one of you is chairing it. One of the agenda items is a British TU report on recent developments in EU countries involving national or union activities. You will each have a country report (from T&G Record article below) to study and then you will be asked to give a brief résumé of this to the meeting.

The group may be divided into two ‘meetings’ if it is large. The chairperson(s) will organise the meeting and discussions may develop.
Belgian unions fight to defend retirement rights

Belgium’s three main union bodies waged their third strike since October against the Liberal-Socialist government’s “unacceptable” early retirement reform plan.

The government's plan is to raise existing early retirement arrangements from 58 to 60 in line with European Union proposals. The latest movement followed last October’s first public service and private sector general stoppage for 12 years that paralysed the country for 24 hours.

Concern over ‘Grand Coalition’ policies

Germany’s trade unions have expressed concern that the country’s new ‘Grand Coalition’ is preparing to implement the anti-working class policies that they fought under the Social Democrat/Green coalition.

The new coalition between the conservative Christian Democrats and the Social Democrats was formed after neither party won a majority in the recent general election.

Trade unions, pensioners’ associations and Die Linke/PDS, the new pro-union political grouping, have all criticised the new coalition’s policies to raise VAT from 16% to 19%, introduce more labour flexibility and lengthen working hours for public service workers. There is also concern that employers will be able to dismiss workers without reason in the first two years of employment, up from six months now.

Italian unions fight cuts

Italy’s three TUCs called a four to eight hour stoppage and held mass demonstrations in all the major cities in a major day of action against the conservative government’s spending cuts months before the forthcoming elections set for 9th April.

Public transport, government services, post offices, banks and hospitals were all paralysed in the sixth general strike since Silvio Berlusconi, Italy’s billionaire prime minister, won power in May 2001. The unions, representing 11.2 million members, were protesting against £13 billion in spending cuts and the government’s approval of a pensions reform package that will push retirement from 57 now to 60 in 2008. The cuts include slashing 100,000 public service jobs.
Spanish government moots retirement after 65

The Spanish Socialist government is contemplating a parliamentary bill to push the retirement age beyond the present 65. The measure, still at the discussion stage, follows the previous conservative administration's lengthening of the age of retirement from 63 to 65 in 2002. The government says it will also bring in measures to penalise workers seeking to benefit from early retirement arrangements.

Danes reject higher retirement age

A majority of Danes oppose lengthening the age of retirement from the present 65, a new opinion poll shows. Almost 59% said they were against the idea while 32% were favourable and the remaining 9% undecided. Denmark's age of retirement was reduced from 67 to 65 in 2004 but the government is now seeking to raise the age to finance the pensions system.

Millions protest over French labour reforms

French unions claim more than a million workers took to the streets in early March.

The protesters were campaigning against government proposals to loosen France's labour laws by making it easier to fire young workers at short notice.

Since the strike French prime minister Dominique de Villepin has come under increased pressure to abandon the plans. Socialist party leader François Hollande called on the government to suspend the new contract as he indicated the Socialists would challenge the law in France's constitutional court.
DEALING WITH DATA AND STATISTICS

A case study

In your work you may have to deal with describing trends, analysing production figures and comparing them with other statistics. The selected vocabulary and the exercise analysing the situation in the UK city of Birmingham, as shown in the newspaper graphs (Employment & Unemployment) and bar charts (Value to local economy & Skills) will give you some practice and confidence in this area.
**VOCABULARY**

All these words are in standard use for analysing statistics, especially describing what is shown in graphs, charts etc.

*Familiarise yourself with them and then apply them in Exercise 2:*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOUNS</th>
<th>VERBS</th>
<th>ADJECTIVES / ADVERBS</th>
<th>OTHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pie chart</td>
<td>plummet</td>
<td>slight / slightly</td>
<td>this :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bar chart</td>
<td>correspond</td>
<td>gentle/ gently</td>
<td>- proves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>graph</td>
<td>increase</td>
<td>steady / steadily</td>
<td>- indicates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>table</td>
<td>rise</td>
<td>sharp / sharply</td>
<td>- demonstrates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>figures</td>
<td>grow</td>
<td>sudden / suddenly</td>
<td>this is :</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>statistics</td>
<td>progress</td>
<td>abrupt / abruptly</td>
<td>- evidence of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>increase</td>
<td>decrease</td>
<td>considerable</td>
<td>- proof of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rise</td>
<td>fall</td>
<td>average</td>
<td>compared to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>growth</td>
<td>slump</td>
<td>important</td>
<td>in contrast to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>progress</td>
<td>plunge</td>
<td>stable</td>
<td>in comparison:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decrease</td>
<td>decline</td>
<td>static</td>
<td>- with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fall</td>
<td>change</td>
<td>upward</td>
<td>- to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slump</td>
<td></td>
<td>downward</td>
<td>opposite to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plunge</td>
<td></td>
<td>clearly</td>
<td>similar to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>decline</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>it gives rise to</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reduction</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>deterioration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>change</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>stability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trend</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Working with language 3 68
1 Opposites

Give the words with the opposite meaning to the ones listed below. There may be more than one possible answer:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a) fall</th>
<th>e) opposite to</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b) sharply</td>
<td>f) slight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c) progress (noun)</td>
<td>g) steady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d) stability</td>
<td>h) increase</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2 Analysis

Using the information given in the charts and graphs of Birmingham and the vocabulary above, complete the following sentences by using words from the above list (one line = one word). There may be more than one word suitable in some cases.

Example: During 1996 there was a ________ ________ in unemployment in Birmingham.

Answer: During 1996 there was a sharp/a abrupt fall/slump/decrease/decline in unemployment in Birmingham.

1. In the ________ ________ on Skills in England the ________ ________ that between 2001 and 2004, there has been a ________ ________ in the number of workers with qualifications

2. The ________ on Unemployment clearly ________ that between 1996 and 2003 the ________ ________ in unemployment figures in Birmingham ________ more or less with the ________ in the UK.
3. Between 1998 and 2004 there has been a _______ _______ in employment in the manufacturing sector, as the _______ on Employment _______.

4. The _______ _______ on Value to Local Economy _______ _______ that, between 1989 and 2003, the _______ in the Health & Social Work sector is _______ _______ that in the Hotel & Restaurant sector.

5. _______ _______ _______ Manufacturing, the Employment _______ for Real Estate etc. and for Hotels etc. have remained relatively _______ between 1999 and 2001, both sectors showing a very _______ _______.

Birmingham city centre
Who does the talking?
Do you speak a lot? Are you a talkative sort of person?

1. Draw a line on the Speakometer below to indicate how much you think
   a. you speak
   b. your partner/best friend speaks
   c. your boss speaks

2. Draw a line on the Speakometer below to indicate how much you think different nationalities speak
   d. Americans
   e. Your own nationality
   f. Other ____________
3 Compare your results with those of a partner and see if you can come up with any generalisations about different national characteristics

Involving others

Whether the amount of active participation in conversations and meetings depends on individual personalities or national attitudes and customs, it is clearly important to involve colleagues in discussions and to encourage them to share their opinions. Otherwise some people (especially native speakers of English!) may dominate a meeting. Some people only contribute to discussions when they are invited to do so and a good chairperson usually recognises this need and tries to encourage colleagues to express their views.

Encouraging others to speak

Here are some expressions we can use. Can you add any others?

- So, what do you think, Petra?
- Would you like to add something, Franz?
- How about you, Carla?
- Michel, could you tell us about the situation in your country/organisation?
- It would be interesting to hear the views of the Estonian delegate on this issue

Acknowledging what others are saying

It is also helpful to indicate that we are listening to others and understanding what they are trying to say.

Here are some expressions we can use. Can you add any others?

- OK
- Yes
- I see
- Fine
- Right

Are you listening?
Starting again if you have a problem expressing yourself

Sometimes when we are explaining something, especially in another language, we are lost for a word or we have a problem with the grammar. We find ourselves in a language “cul de sac” and we cannot find our way out!

People frequently use fillers such as “um” and “er” while their brain is searching for a solution (listen, for example, to Working with Listening 2).

The best solution is to reverse and to try to find another way of saying things. Here are some expressions we can use in order to do this. Can you add any others?

- Sorry I’ll start again
- What I want to say is.....
- What I mean is......
- What I’m trying to explain is....
- Let me put it this way....

Gaining time to think about what you want to say

Again if you need time to think, you can avoid an immediate answer and stall for a few seconds by using expressions such as:

- That’s an interesting question....
- I’ll have to think about that....
- Now, where should I start....
- Well it’s like this.....

4 In groups, choose and discuss one of the subjects below and try to use some of the speaking strategies to include everyone, to show you are listening and to help yourself when you get stuck for a word or expression.

(Groups may like to observe each other and give feedback on the effective use of the speaking strategies)

- a. What is culture?
- b. “When in Rome, do as the Romans do”
- c. What are the major social issues today?
- d. “The bigger the EU, the better it will be”
**EWC membership**

As a result of a merger between two multinational companies, it is necessary to adjust the membership of the EWC in order to reflect the relative sizes of the workforces in the combined organisation. The new Group Company will have its headquarters in Amsterdam.

Prior to the merger each company had its own European Works Council as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company A based in the Netherlands</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No of employees</th>
<th>No of delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2900</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>9700</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>3900</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slovakia</td>
<td>1500</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romania</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>1200</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19340</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company B based in the UK</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>No of employees</th>
<th>No of delegates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>2100</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>3100</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poland</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>5500</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11380</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
European Works Councils

You are asked to negotiate revised membership of the EWC as follows:

Stage 1
It has been agreed that the restructured EWC will have a maximum of 18 members. Employee representatives from each company are asked to meet and to make proposals for the number of delegates for the new EWC. (If appropriate, representatives from the two groups can make contact with each other via email)

Stage 2
Each group brings their proposals to a joint meeting at which a decision has to be reached with regard to the recommendations that will go forward to the management of the new group company.

Freudenberg EWC delegates on a factory visit
### Communication activity 2

**Goals and priorities for the EWC**

Your company, which has plants in Finland, Spain and Ireland, has agreed to set up an EWC.

1. **In three (national) groups, look at the following possible goals for an EWC, and decide which are the most and least important, by putting the numbers 1 (most important) to 14 (least important) next to each.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possible goals</th>
<th>1-14</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. improving international contacts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. exchanging information</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. exchanging best practice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. spotting misinformation from management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. developing early-warning systems, for example, in the case of impending restructuring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. fusing information for consultation or bargaining</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. preventing social dumping</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>h. developing joint initiatives, for example, on vocational training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. developing joint alternatives to management proposals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>j. promoting equal opportunities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>k. the possibility of receiving information directly from group headquarters</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>l. the possibility of exchanging opinions with central management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m. the possibility of addressing local problems with central management</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n. the possibility of meeting with central management and exchanging opinions in ‘exceptional circumstances’ such as plant closure</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(This activity is adapted from *Working with the European Works Council*, ETUCO-AFETT 1999)
European Works Councils

2 Compare your priorities with those of the other two groups.
   - Discuss the differences.
   - Together, try to agree a list of the top six priorities for your EWC

3 Prepare a poster to inform your colleagues about the new EWC, and about your suggestions for priorities.

4. What qualities do you think a good EWC delegate should have? Make a list.

Freudenberg EWC delegates on an English course
Communication activity 3

**An organising model for the EWC**

*(for EWC members)*

An effective EWC needs a clear structure, and the members need a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities.

1. (All members of the group individually.)

   *Make a list of concrete items and current problems you would like to discuss in the EWC. If you think an item may not be appropriate, include it anyway.*

2. **Combine all the lists**

   [You could make a mind-map, to group common points of concern]
   
   ✓ What are the common elements?
   ✓ What are the priorities?

3. **Select the ten most important items on the basis of their feasibility and how they can help achieve the general goals of the EWC** (see previous Activity).

4. **Discuss which working methods are appropriate for each item:**

   The elements below might help in your discussion:
   
   • Analysing information from management and comparing this to the local situation
   • Analysing information from other EWC members, and comparing this to the local situation
   • Defining ‘best practice’
   • Co-ordinating local action
   • Developing a common opinion
   • Projects

5. **Pool your ideas, so that you end up with a list of priorities together with suggestions for working methods to achieve these goals.**

*(This activity is adapted from Working with the European Works Council, ETUCO-AFET 1999)*
Looking back

Now you have finished this unit you should....

- be able to talk about yourself confidently
- understand the role of EWCs
- be able to compare different agreements
- be able to participate more fully in meetings
- write an e-mail and send a text message
- be able to discuss data and statistics