

PRESS RELEASE

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Trade union rights and collective bargaining: Commitments on the principles, heterogeneous practices

The respect for trade union rights and the promotion of collective bargaining, two fundamental rights, gather more declarations of intention than concrete commitments among European companies. Nevertheless, nearly 1 European multinational out of 10 does have a social dialogue strategy in place and dedicates serious and transparent management tools to it. Vigeo has recently released a study on those topics.

The most innovative European corporations integrate in their managerial strategies full implementation of trade union rights and the promotion of collective bargaining.

Clear principles are the building foundation of a responsible framework supported by training, audits and reporting tools. Not only in their European countries of origin, but also worldwide.

However, the innovative companies remain a minority. They represent 8% of the 511 European companies whose policies and management structures were analysed on an individual basis by Vigeo.

The 10 leading companies in this panel are:

AGF (Insurance – France)
Air France – KLM (Air Transport – France)
Carrefour (Supermarkets – France)
EDF (Electric & Gas Utilities – France)
Hennes & Mauritz (Specialised Retail – Suède)
Iberia (Air Transport – Espagne)
Philips Electronics (Technology-Hardware – Pays-Bas)
PSA Peugeot Citroën (Automobiles – France)
Skanska B (Heavy Construction – Allemagne)
Volkswagen AG (Automobiles – Allemagne)

A majority of the rated companies (64%) are committed to trade union rights and collective bargaining, be them in principle or formalized. But only 10% translated them into coherent and tangible managerial actions and 33% of them only up to a very limited extent..

According to Fouad Benseddik, Director of Methodology in Vigeo: “The study results show that nation or sector characteristics of the way working relations or trade union representatives are organised are not in themselves enough to explain the way EU corporations deal with these issues at a global level. The top-management commitment is a factor of differentiation.”

When a framework agreement is signed between a company and a trade union federation, it is valued in the Vigeo rating process as an advanced sign for commitment. Nevertheless, so far, we have not observed many tangible elements of their implementation, reporting and results. The first framework agreements were signed by French corporations (Danone, then Accor), while the most recent one concerned France Telecom.

Scope of the study : 511 European companies in 17 countries, and 32 different sectors. Most of them with a worldwide presence. The European companies under review were rated by Vigeo between November 2004 and July 2006.

Study conducted by Nadine Thévenet and Jordi Lesaffer

21 February 2007: Presentation of the study results by Nicole Notat, Vigeo Chairman, at the ORSE Conference:

“European companies commitment for social dialogue and workers freedom of expression”.
9h-12h30, Conseil Economique et Social (Paris 16ème)

With high profile speakers: Walter Cerfeda (ETUC), François Chérèque, (CFDT, General Secretary), Bertrand Collomb (Lafarge, Chairman), François Perigot (IOE, Chairman), Daniel Richard (WWF France, Chairman), Guy Ryder (ITUC, General Secretary), Olivier de Schutter, (FIDH, General Secretary), Jean-Luc Vergne (PSA Peugeot Citroën, HR Director)

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About Vigeo

Vigeo is the Leading European Corporate Social Responsibility Ratings Agency. Vigeo measures the companies' CSR performance on environmental, social and governance (ESG) criteria and identifies ESG risk factors.

Vigeo provides two services:

- SRI analysis (Socially Responsible Investment), ratings and benchmarks for investors and asset managers
- CSR Audits for companies and local governments

An expanding group: The Vigeo teams represent 75 employees of 14 different nationalities, in 4 locations: Paris, Brussels, Milan, Casablanca.