



European Commission



# Thematic report

## Value chain restructuring and industrial relations - the role of workplace representation in changing conditions of employment and work

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### The project

WORKS is an Integrated Project with 17 partner institutes across the EU, funded under the EC's 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Programme to investigate the restructuring of work in the knowledge-based society in a comparative perspective.

Taking account both of global forces and of the regional diversity within Europe, and using both quantitative and qualitative methods, the project has studied the evolving division of labour within and between organisations and related changes at the workplace, including the implications for the use of skills and knowledge, for flexibility and for the quality of work, as well as the impact on occupational identities, time use and individual learning of individuals. Special attention has been paid to the role of the social dialogue and of the varieties of institutional shaping in Europe.

This is one of eleven thematic reports produced by the project.

### Summary of the report

This report analyses the role that staff representatives and institutionalised systems of industrial relations play in value chain restructuring and asks what workplace actors can do to moderate the effects at the workplace, what structures exist to represent worker interests, what processes take place to influence the restructuring process and outcomes, what are the impacts on density and bargaining scope.

Among the report's conclusions are:

- restructuring is a management prerogative;
- there are major national differences;
- there are major differences between sectors;
- knowledge workers tend to use more individually based strategies; production workers draw on a tradition of collective action; service workers' strategies depend on whether they are in the public or private sector;
- use of European Works Councils or international networks is very rare;
- employers' use of outsourced and flexible workers provoke strategies of protection rather than incorporation by core workers.

This report will be available in draft form for discussion at the WORKS conference in Rome and will then be revised for publication in book form in 2009.

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<http://www.worksproject.be>