



Managers and professionals, positions and roles in the transport sector

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Synthesis

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The transport industry is historically composed of men that are mainly blue collar workers. Yet today, managers and professionals represent an increasing growing number of employees in the transport sectors. This evolution is the result of structural changes that are taking place in the transport companies. These structural changes are combined with a strong increase in qualifications and an important development of new technologies. They are also linked to an increasing number of women in transport sectors.

In order to communicate more efficiently with this group of highly qualified employees and to improve the social dialogue in European transport sectors, a better understanding of their role and their situation was necessary.

Therefore, in 2007, in the debate on sustainable development in Europe, in line with the Responsible European Management developed by EUROCADRES, the European Transport Federation has developed a work program entitled “managerial staff: position and role in the transport sector”. The present research is included in the framework of this program. Its goal was to obtain a better knowledge and understanding of the real situations that managerial and professional staff encounters in the transport companies and their links to social partners and, more specifically, the European Transport Workers’ Federation.

This research has been organized in two parts. Firstly, we have conducted analysis of statistic data from Eurostat and ILO. Secondly, we have realised a qualitative study by questionnaires carried out on managers and professionals, members of ETF.

Statistical analysis (1997-2006)

The statistical study has been carried out on the evolution of these categories of employees in the transport sector. The main question concerns the evolution of the number of managers and professionals in the European Transport Industry (ETF sectors) during the 1997 to 2006 period and their situation in 2006. An evolution and a situation compared to other categories of persons employed in ETF sectors themselves but also to the whole of national populations studied including managers and professionals in overall sectors. Regarding theses questions, and focusing on ETF sectors, the main results revealed by the statistical study are the following.

Globally, from 1997 to 2006, trends in the evolution of the number of managers and of the number of professionals are different.

Thus, in the managers' category, this trend is globally in favour of self employed without employees. For professionals, it is globally in favour of employed employees. A focus on the various categories of employees shows that the number of women has increased faster in the managers' category than in the professionals' one. Concerning the age pyramid, results show that the number of 20-29 years old employees has decreased in the managers' category whereas it has increased in the professionals' one. Moreover, the number of 50-59 years old employees has increased more slowly in the managers' category than in the professionals' one. Concerning the levels of education, results show that the rate of high level of education has increased faster in the managers' category than in the professionals' one. At last, these increases of high levels of education in managers' and professionals' categories are mainly due to women.

Of course, concerning these evolutions from 1997 to 2006, some disparities exist between countries but the general trend shows an overall movement of homogenisation.

It results from these evolutions that in 2006 and for the ETF sectors, managers belong less often to the salaried employees' category than professionals do. Employee status concerns 60.84% of the managers and 97.56% of the professionals. Inversely, the status of self employed without employees concerns 9.54% of the managers and 1.74% of the professionals.

A focus on the employees shows the following situation. Concerning gender distinctions, nowadays, the rate of managers and professional are similar. There are 30.08% of women in the managers' category and there are 27.97% of women in the professionals' category. Concerning the age pyramid, differences between managers and professionals concern employees aged from 20 to 29 years old. Professionals are younger than managers and women professionals represent 39.24% of this age category. At last, concerning the rate of high level of education, we notice that it's more important in the professionals' category than in the managers' one (66.45% against 43.93%). Overall, professionals have a better level of education than managers.

Of course, disparities exist between countries.

Concerning the formal responsibility for supervising other employees in EFT sectors and in 2006, 19.10% of the salaried employees supervise the work of other salaried employees.

That concerns 81.64% of managers but only 29.69% of women. The rate of formal responsibility in the managers' category increases with the rate of women professionals. It decreases when the rate of low level of education in the professionals' category decreases.

The formal responsibility for supervising other employees also concerns professionals. But only 42.35% of them are concerned by it and moreover only 23.36% are women. Rates of professionals with supervisory responsibilities are correlated to rates of salaried employees that have low levels of education, in particular employees belonging to groups 3 to 9. In ETF sectors, the more the rates of salaried employees having 20-29 years old and a low level of education increase (in particular those

belonging to groups 3 to 9), the more the rate of professionals with supervisory responsibilities increases. The characteristics of salaried employees belonging to groups 3 to 9 condition the allocation of supervisory responsibilities for professionals. Formal responsibility for supervising other employees is also an object of gender discrimination. This is more important for professionals than for managers.

At last, 14.86% of other employees (ISCO 3 to 9) have the formal responsibility for supervising other employees but women only represent 21.77% of them. Above all and beyond gender discriminations, these results show that these categories of salaried employees can be sensitized to Responsible European Management.

Qualitative approach by questionnaires

The qualitative study results from a set of 50 interviews by questionnaires carried out on managers and professionals, members of ETF and come from 13 different countries¹. The sample group was diversified by sex, age, functions, level of education, sectors (even if transport via railway dominates), type and size of companies.

The main objectives were to analyse the working conditions of managers and professionals, their position and their role, and to identify the best practice of management and their mechanisms. The themes of the study concerns the working conditions, the questions of responsibilities, the questions of autonomy, the difficulties and the problems encountered, the questions of discrimination, the relations with employers, the representations and the opinions about trade-union, the successes, obstacles and needs related to the trade union and social dialog.

The main results revealed by the qualitative study are the following.

Working conditions have been analysed from the point of view of professional responsibilities, targets, autonomy, control and disciplinary sanctions.

Concerning professional responsibilities, results indicate that financial responsibilities are related to budgets of companies or departments. But in our sample group, that only concerns managers. The managerial responsibilities involve general management but also the coaching of technical teams. That concerns a large part of the managers but only some professionals. The technical responsibilities are related to technical systems. They mostly concern the professionals. Therefore,

¹ Denmark (9M&P), Austria (8 M&P), Sweden (6M&P), Bulgaria (6M&P), France (6M&P), Switzerland (5M&P), Germany (2M&P), Portugal (2M&P), United Kingdom (2M&P), Belgium (1M&P), Luxembourg (1M&P), Croatia (1M&P) and Latvia (1M&P)

professional responsibilities result from the organization and the division of activities between managers and professionals.

Results related to penal responsibilities show that managers and professionals are divided. Professionals seem to be more concerned than managers but a tendency to a juridical transfer of the penal responsibilities on M&P exist and therefore, the company has the possibility to disclaim its responsibility.

Concerning professional targets, the results indicate that qualitative targets are more frequent than quantitative targets. Quantitative targets concern volumes and quality of production, cost and time allowed. They can be measured by statistics and reports. Qualitative targets concern quality of work but also quality of management. Qualitative targets are easier to negotiate than quantitative targets. Therefore, levels of negotiation depend on the type of targets. Moreover, it depends on managers' and professionals' knowledge and competences during negotiations and controls. That also depends on the level of dialogue inside companies.

Autonomy at work is also a factor of distinction between managers and professionals. Women consider that they are a little less autonomous than men. Above all, managers, directors and chief executives seem to be more autonomous than other managers or professionals. Even if some managers and professionals are not really autonomous or not autonomous at all, their situation can suit them. In the meantime, autonomy at work must be analyzed in relation with the control at work. Thus, most of the managers and professionals are controlled but the more the managers and professionals are close to productive spaces, the more the controls are present and frequent. At last, the controls are correlated to disciplinary actions. Here again, professionals seem to be more concerned. The distinctions between managers and professionals increase.

Professional relations have been analysed from the point of view of relations with companies, top management, hierarchy, colleagues and subordinates.

In specific contexts concerning responsibilities, targets, autonomy, controls and disciplinary actions, professional relations are problematic. In spite of financial capitalism dynamics, reorganization and increase of demand of work, the opinions of managers and professionals on companies are rather good while opinions on top management are rather bad. Relations with companies, own hierarchy and subordinates are preserved but relations with top management are in crisis. This situation is correlated to distinctions that exist between the different managers and professionals and moreover between strategic activities and activities of production. That can also be explained by the fact that most often, managers and professionals have not a stakeholder approach of the companies.

In these situations, fortunately, in front of hierarchies, managers and professionals can give their point of view. That is also true for their subordinates. Nowadays, local compromises are the main

way to manage professional relations and especially the potential conflicts between subordinates, professionals, managers and the top managers.

The following main results concern more generally difficulties at work. In spite of a low rate of answers that can be explained by a lack of information about discrimination, these ones exist and they mostly concern gender, political opinions, age, and trade union activities. Most often, even if some reactions exist between protagonists, discriminations continue. Alone, trade unions seem to be able to put an end to the discrimination but their actions are limited and their local, national and European actions must be done in parallel with better European information about discriminations.

Concerning injuries and accidents, the rate of positive answers is important. Qualitative data confirm trends revealed by statistical analysis and show some interesting examples of dangers at work. In front of injuries and accidents, most of the hierarchic lines and top management have taken measures to remedy the situation. But it might take a long time before recording a significant reduction in the number of injuries and accidents.

Concerning social dialogue in the companies, overall, the situation is rather satisfactory but directors and chief executives are most often satisfied than other managers and professionals. Responsible European Management is currently in embryonic state. Whatever the situations may be (satisfying or unsatisfying), direction, managers and employees have equivalent responsibilities. There is a structure of responsibilities which includes all the stakeholders of productive organization. Trade unions are present, but only at a secondary level of action. It means that in the managerial and professional representations, trade unions are not included in the stakeholders of productive organization. The situation is similar for shareholders who seem to have no responsibilities about the social dialogue in their company. Afterwards, the analysis of mediation dynamics confirms it: when managerial or technical problems happen, proximity relations between the hierarchy and managers, cooperation and solidarity between colleagues are the best ways to regulate the activities at work. This is also true when difficulties concern social or personal problems. Trade unions are involved in the regulation but they only come after the hierarchy, the managers and the colleagues. This report questions the place of trade unions in the social regulation. This one is correlated with managers and professionals' opinions about strategies, communication, trainings and services put in place by trade unions. Overall, managers and professionals think that local, regional and national strategies, communication, trainings and services are efficient or very efficient. But we have underlined it: trade unions have difficulties to take part in the social regulation. It means that, at the present time, it exists a distance between trade unions, managers and

professionals. This distance decreases when emergency problems happen. In particular, when managers or professionals need a specific help from trade unions, that is: a legal representation, a juridical and a financial assistance. If this hypothesis is confirmed, trade unions should be more attentive to managers' and professionals' problems and difficulties before their emergence. They should develop supports in order to help them in their activities. Representatives should learn to negotiate all the aspects of the companies with managerial staffs. For example, these efforts should be based on the stakeholder theory. Then, trade unions would be able to participate to social regulations and to develop the Responsible European Management model.