

Projekt unijny**:** <http://direct-project.org/>

**The national seminar in Warsaw within the DIRECT project - ”The end of the culture of serfdom in Polish firms and institutions? The winding road to development and modernity”. This was organised for June 11th 2018 by *SGH***

The organisers of the event made ready three Panel Discussions with the participation of academic, trade union activists and employers’ organisations, as well as managers, experts and journalists. In the course of almost 20 appearances and presentations, participants engaged in the thorough discussion of a wide range of issues associated with employee participation, the organisation of labour, management culture and so on.

Andrzej Zybała, a project coordinator, explained to the audience the goals within the project and the research undertaken in it. He told about the project consortium and the theoretical assumptions adopted at the beginning the its operations.

Within a general introduction Katarzyna Szelągowska-Rudzka discussed distinctive features of the notions participation has been associated with. She defined direct participation – as distinct from the indirect version – as ”democracy in the place of work", in the sense that both entitlements and responsibilities were conferred upon employees, allowing them to participate personally in decisionmaking that related to the shaping of the place of work and the labour process (e.g. the way in which the job was to be done, the hours of start and finish, breaks during working time, and so on).

**Panel Discussion 1: thresholds and barriers in management by engagement and empowerment**

The first of the planned panel discussions was then held, in the matter of thresholds and barriers in management by engagement and empowerment. This was under the moderation of Prof. **Marta Juchnowicz** of SGH, who pointed to the multiplicity of positive effects of involving employees, including as regards productivity, a dampening of possibly fluctuating situations, and more limited absences on sick leave.

She pointed to a clear consequence of employee involvement, noting that: ”we may not speak of an innovative economy where employees shown no creativity and initiative, and hence do nothing to build innovative enterprises and firms. Engagement on the part of employees is a basic condition for success in the circumstances of *economy 4.0*.”

Meanwhile, the speaker noted how little cause for optimism there was in the annual results of surveys on levels of involvement of employees. This was in particular attested to in international studies contained in the *Aon Hewitt* report, which also encompassed Polish employees – 72,000 respondents in 119 Polish firms.

The next speakers - Andrzej Blikle, prof. K. Jasiecki, Michał Drozdek.

**Panel Discussion 2: an end to the culture of serfdom in the workplace?**

In the second Panel Discussion, those involved began with the subject of “the organisational culture of firms and offices – an end to the culture of serfdom in the workplace?” The moderator here was **Andrzej Zybała (of SGH),** who reminded participants that Poland was still debating the issue of the legacy of the culture of serfdom, which symbolised a lack of partnership in relations between the superior and the subordinate, and hence an authoritarian style of management. Many academics, experts and managers themselves were actually responsible for perpetuating models of this type, with the result being a deterioration of the atmosphere at work, with efficiency suffering, and the Polish economy ultimately made less competitive as a result.

The next speakers - Marek Tarnowski, Jan Czarzasty, Piotr Ciompa, Rafał Bakalarczyk, Natalia Marska-Dzioba,

**Panel Discussion 3: Deliberation - interests, knowledge and emotions**

The third Panel was run under the title ”The role of employees’ representatives in animating participation and the enfranchisement of workers”. Prof. Jacek Sroka of the Pedagogical University of Cracow moderated the attendant discussion, emphasising that it was necessary to draw a distinction between three elements crucial to dialogue and participation.

It was considered that those embarking on a process of dialogue ought to have the necessary knowledge, and be able to build on emotion and tone down benefits. The contemporary view was in turn that benefits, emotions and knowledge could not really be disentangled from one another. Thus the three elements were considered to interact together in a more profound dialogue.

In the Polish situation, there was considered to be deep cultural and institutional conditioning of industrial relations in what is a tectonically-active area. The Professor saw this conditioning as strong, with the result that possibilities for a more profound dialogue to be applied were curtailed. In contrast, there was deemed to be more of that kind of dialogue in the Nordic countries, and inevitably less in countries like Poland where the feudal-type culture was maintained.

The next speakers - dr Katarzyna Skorupińska-Cieślak, Barbara Surdykowska, Piotr Szumlewicz, Zygmunt Mierzejewski, Bogusław Kaczmarek, dr Rafał Towalski