Thales and European Metalworkers’ Federation sign TALK, the first Europe-wide agreement on the annual activity discussion

Guaranteeing a Transparent annual Activity discussion for Listening and developing professional Knowledge

Neuilly-sur-Seine, 14 April 2010 – Thales and the European Metalworkers’ Federation (EMF) announce today the signing of a Europe-wide agreement known as TALK, which sets out the basic principles to guarantee that the Annual Activity Discussion (AAD) with each Thales employee is conducted in a socially responsible climate of mutual respect and comprehension.

57,000 employees in 11 countries to benefit

The TALK agreement covers 57,000 Thales employees and comes into immediate effect in 11 European countries. It will be applied in full compliance with pre-existing national and regional agreements, where these are more favourable for employees. Similarly, pre-existing salary provisions, such as across-the-board increases, for example, will not be affected.

Reflecting a shared commitment to transparency, TALK ensures that each and every Thales employee, managers included, will benefit from an AAD. According to the agreement, the AAD should be conducted face-to-face in the employee’s native language, and be an opportunity for dialogue as part of a constructive effort to encourage and facilitate professional development. It also aims to promote a broader and more collective approach to improvement by reframing individual job performance within a context of teamwork.

Building on best practices identified in the European countries concerned, TALK extends the AAD to include an appeal procedure, for example, as a framework for the resolution of possible disagreements between managers and employees. Aware that the annual activity discussion may in some cases be a source of anxiety, the parties have agreed on the introduction of an alert procedure, to be reviewed on a regular basis. In addition, the agreement includes compulsory training for future managers to help them fulfil their roles more effectively as well as optional training for each individual employee in how to prepare for the AAD.

1 Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.
Unprecedented tool for social dialogue

Yves Barou, Senior Vice President, in charge of Human Resources at Thales, recognises that the AAD has “long remained a practice where management ruled supreme. And yet the annual discussion is vitally important in the lives of employees. So there was no reason to exclude it from the scope of dialogue with unions, particularly since the discussion can lead to anxiety and even stress for some employees. We therefore need to ensure that the AAD is not only an opportunity for genuine dialogue, but is also subject to a process of continuous improvement. In this way, Thales has again demonstrated its continuing commitment to the human dimension of its management approach.”

Bart Samyn, Deputy General Secretary of the EMF, welcomes this key agreement: “For the first time, trade unions have obtained strong commitments from management, such as the right of recourse, in an area that has until now been exclusively controlled by senior executives and management. The EMF thus intends to pursue European social dialogue on the issues that concern the day-to-day lives of employees and meet the social challenges of the 21st century.”

Social innovation, a hallmark of Thales’s human resources policy

The TALK agreement follows the 2009 introduction by Thales of a redesigned employee appraisal system. “The notion of individual performance places too much emphasis on short-term achievement and does not reflect the real foundations of long-term professional success — knowledge, skills and teamwork,” says Yves Barou. Rather than evaluating employees on their individual performance, Thales now prefers to base assessments on the employee’s overall level of job performance, with a greater focus on long-term results and professional development.

TALK builds on the Europe-wide IDEA agreement, concluded in June 2009 to improve professional development of employees through more effective anticipation. The initial results of the IDEA agreement were outlined at the last meeting of the transnational social body. In the first nine months since IDEA was signed, some 40% of the agreement have already been implemented.