Theme 3: Employee representation and employee voice

Union representation and job quality in the UK finance sector

Kim Hoque, in collaboration with Unite and with colleagues from Royal Holloway University of London and Cass Business School, looked at whether employee perceptions of job quality are better in instances where an onsite union representative is present. He also attempted to identify whether the relationship between onsite representatives and job quality is explained by employee perceptions of union collective voice. The analysis, based on a survey of union members in the UK finance sector, demonstrates that employee perceptions of several dimensions of job quality are better where an onsite representative is present, and that this can be explained by the higher perceptions of union collective voice that onsite representatives engender.

Further developments in representation and voice

Jimmy Donaghey, Mark Hall, John Purcell and Mark Carley completed their review of the EU’s Information and Consultation Directive (2002/14/EC), which was already described in last year’s Annual Report. Their findings indicate that while the Directive did not initiate a new wave of meaningful consultation in countries that introduced general I&C legislation for the first time, it did play a ‘nudging’ role in encouraging some organisations, particularly multinationals based in the UK and Ireland, to establish and/or strengthen I&C processes. Similarly, the wide flexibilities allowed by the Directive and national legislation to the social partners did not encourage the widespread adoption of I&C practices. This research was cited by the European Commission in its July 2013 response to the “Fitness Check” of the I&C Directives.

Associate Fellows Mark Hall and John Purcell, with Adam Duncan of the Institute for Employment Research, started an analysis of the 2011 Workplace Employment Relations Survey data on Information & Consultation of employees, funded by ACAS. The research found that, possibly as an effect of the new I&C regulations, the decline in Joint Consultative Committees (JCC) was halted between 2004 and 2011 and their number increased in medium-size companies (100-250 employees). JCC are more frequent and more resilient in workplaces where trade unions are also present, and are often combined with other forms of communication.

Guglielmo Meardi set up an international network of researchers interested in the representation of groups particularly affected by the crisis in UK, Germany, Italy, USA and Argentina.