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REPRESENTATION OF EMPLOYEE INTERESTS IN THE SUBSIDIARIES OF THE
POLISH STATE RAILWAYS (PKP SA) – A DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

Dissertation in the field of Management Sciences

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The research problem addressed in this dissertation involves the assessment of employee interest representation in various subsidiaries of the PKP Group. Empirical research was conducted over the period of 2011-2014, in the form of on-site examinations of three subsidiary companies of the PKP SA, responsible for the following segments of operation: rail freight, infrastructure management, and passenger transport. Sector specificity was one of the main premises for the research task at hand, due to strong unionisation of the state railways enterprise and its assumed effects upon the practical realisation of employee interest in this segment.

The research addressed both research questions and hypotheses. From a cognitive perspective, it was designed to broaden the understanding of employee interests, their recognition, and their utility for management purposes. Based on empirical research, the most important interests were identified and structured in a hierarchical order, in the context of the motivational potential offered by the recognition of each interest. Employee expectations were evaluated in two separate groups – blue-collar employees, and managerial staff – both with reference to properly respected interests and those perceived by employees as less important. Another distinction employed for the purpose of the study was the division into interests safeguarded by law and those decided upon by company management within the framework of the adopted principles and human resource management recommendations. The

research was also designed to evaluate the role of trade union structures in the protection of employee interests.

Analysis of survey data collected in the course of empirical research shows a fairly good concordance between hierarchies of interests reported in each of the companies under study. The observed conformity was subsequently tested based on the use of statistical methods. The findings seem to confirm the significance assigned by respondents to the satisfaction of interests protected by law. This may be the result of the clearly recognised role of formal regulations in the provision of safety and security of rail transport. However, there was evidence for inadequate monitoring with respect to proper representation of employee interests associated with the broadly defined personnel function. Managerial cadres seem to be fairly well informed on the expectations of their blue-collar personnel, but are also quite adamant in their view that those expectations are largely met as required. The research findings suggest that those claims are purely declarative. There was strong evidence for the trend to exploit the highly 'profitable' areas of employee interests, i.e. those that yield best payoffs or returns. The trade union structures were found to be of no particular benefit in the analysed context. Those structures are typically focused on their statutory and formally recognised areas of influence, such as company social benefit funds, or fare discounts. The observed approach of trade unions to employee interests seems to be in stark disregard of their real significance and hierarchical order.

Research analyses suggest that proper stimulation of motivational potential offered by satisfaction of employee interests requires, in the first place, good support in the form of a well-designed personnel policy and organisational culture. Therefore, the postulated approach would be for companies to focus on identification of key company values in a human-oriented context. This would involve, most of all, the following:

- identification and monitoring of employee welfare and satisfaction, with focus on blue-collar segment directly involved in rail transport,
- reinforcement of labour relations through favouring the consultative management style,
- reduction of the gap between employer interests and those voiced by trade unions as representatives of the employee base.

The area under study was also approached in the context of the pending and postulated regulations and statutory privileges, including formal restrictions in the number of trade unions per company, in relation to the total number of employed. Postulates were made in support of the formal restriction of trade union privileges, as manifested, for instance, by the

entrenched elitism of top trade union representatives involved in protection of their individual, rather than collective, interests and benefits.