Are employment relations in Europe based on trust? 
The employee representative perspective

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Numerous researchers from various disciplines agree that trust has important benefits for organizations (Dirks & Ferrin, 2001) and their members (Kramer, 1999). However we sometimes find not that easy to achieve the appreciated and desired trust in employment relationships. In this paper, firstly we define the concept of trust and its importance in the European industrial relations. Secondly, we explore how employee representatives (ER) around Europe perceive the relationship with management as well as with co-workers, focusing on trust. Finally, we will conclude with a discussion and some practical recommendations that can help ERs to increase trusty relationships, improving the capacity to participate in the decision making process and leading to a more constructive conflict management.

KEY-WORDS: Trust, employee representatives, industrial relations, management and co-workers.

Relations between employers, trade unions, and employees in Europe are rapidly changing (Euwema, Nauta, Munduate, Medina, Martinez-Pecino & Viemose, 2008). The new competitive demands for organizations, the globalization process and economic turbulence, lead to new organizational relations in which employee representatives (ER) play a central role. ERs are typically employees (part-time or full-time) who play a role as representative within the company. They represent their colleagues in different types of organizational conflicts and decision making processes with the management. The ability of ERs to find out and negotiate new organizational arrangements is essential to support these changes (Rocha,

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