UNI Commerce
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The Schwarz Group (Lidl)

There are few retailers that can match the Schwarz Group's fast and aggressive expansion on the European markets. The German retailer was number 25 in world rankings in 2002 with estimated sales of 21,649[1] Billion USD. The Schwarz Group's discounter chain Lidl sold for an estimated 15.9[2] Billion Euro in 2002. Lidl's sales in 2003 are estimated to reach 20[3] Billion Euro (22 Bill USD).

As a comparison, the closest competitor and world leader among the hard discounters – Aldi, which consists of Aldi Nord and Aldi Süd – ranked number 11 with estimated sales of 33,713[4] Billion USD.

The world leader among all retailers was Wal-Mart, in a class of its own, with 244,524[5] Billion USD in sales, followed by Carrefour with 64,774[6] Billion USD.

Lidl is growing much faster than its main competitor Aldi. During the first half of 2003 Lidl's sales increased by 15 per cent while Aldi's grew by 5 per cent.

The Schwarz Group consists of the following parts:

- Kaufland – large supermarkets / hypermarkets
- Handelshof, Concord – supermarkets
- Lidl – discount supermarkets
- Ruef – wholesale markets
- Warenhandels GmbH – purchasing functions
- Lidl Discount – purchasing functions
- Markant – collecting agency

The number of stores in the Schwarz Group is already over 5,600 and the group has 80,000 employees.

The main owner of the Schwarz Group is Dieter Schwarz, who through the Dieter Schwarz Stiftung controls the company. The Dieter Schwarz Stiftung owns 99.9 percent of the Schwarz Beteiligungs GmbH, the group's holding company. The operative management of the group is in the hands of the Schwarz Unternehmenstreuhand KG, which has all the shareholder voting rights of the Group tied to its 0.1 per cent ownership.

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[1] Lebensmittelzeitung's retail rankings

[2] Managermagazin 9/03

[3] Managermagazin 9/03

[4] Lebensmittelzeitung's retail rankings

[5] Lebensmittelzeitung's retail rankings

[6] Lebensmittelzeitung's retail rankings

The Schwarz Beteiligungs GmbH in its turn controls the two main arms of the Schwarz Group, the Kaufland Stiftung & Co. KG and Lidl Stiftung & Co. KG. Under these two entities, one will find a number of different trading and service firms.

On the operative level in Germany, Lidl has been split up into 400 to 500 separate companies, like its main competitor Aldi. This means also that the company can oppose the creation of efficient works council structures and the election of head shop stewards (Gesamtbetriebsrat). Lidl has indeed gone to great lengths to stop its workers from establishing trade union connected representation structures in the company.

Lidl's development

The Schwarz Group started to emerge in 1930, when Josef Schwarz became a partner in Südfrüchte Grosshandel Lidl & Co., a fruit wholesaler. He then developed the company into a general food wholesaler. As a result of the war, the company was destroyed in 1944, and a ten-year reconstruction period soon started. Based in Heilbronn, it joined the A&O retail chain. In 1972, headquarters moved to their present location, Neckarsulm. Five years later, Josef Schwarz died and his son Dieter took over.

Under Dieter Schwarz, Lidl&Schwarz began to focus on discount markets, larger supermarkets, and cash and carry wholesale markets. The first Lidl discount store was opened in 1973, copying the Aldi concept. In 1977, the Lidl chain comprised 30 discount stores.

Dieter Schwarz' problem was that he could not just start using the Lidl name. As Schwarz Markt (Black Market) did not seem as a good idea, he bought the right to use the Lidl name from a retired teacher Ludwig Lidl, for one thousand German marks.

The Lidl discount markets came to be the foundation for the group's success. In the beginning, Schwarz copied the Aldi concept as closely as possible. Later, Lidl developed its own profile, with larger stores and a bigger assortment than Aldi. The company was successful in establishing itself on the German hard discounter scene, taking on competitors such as Aldi Süd and Aldi Nord, Penny (Rewe), Plus (Tengelmann) and others.

From its base in southern Germany, Lidl started to expand north, and then to other countries in Europe. But Lidl was not the only part of the Schwarz Group to grow rapidly.

Within only a few years from the fall of the Berlin Wall, Schwarz established a chain of 179 Handelshof and Kaufland supermarkets in the new German states. Through this, the company became the market leader in the supermarket trade.[7]

Management

The Schwarz Group management is well known for its aversion against publicity. The company does not do press statements, nor do managers give interviews. Its structure is also such that it can avoid the information obligations, which publicly listed competitors have to abide by. Therefore, most of the information concerning the Group and Lidl comes from external analysts and is based on their assessments and estimates.

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[7] Managermagazin 9/03

“When two Scandinavian colleagues came last year to Heilbronn, in connection with the expansion to Norway, and simply rang the door bell of the private house, Mrs Schwarz opened. “We would like to make an interview with Mr Schwarz. Is this possible, asked the journalists. To this, Mrs Schwarz replied: ”No, my husband is of course already retired from his work”.[8]

Klaus Gehrig, the spokesman of the board, holds the company in tight reins, on behalf of Dieter Schwarz. Power in the company has increasingly been centralised to headquarters in Neckarsulm. It is, however, said that country managers who ‘show that they have format’ can get more freedoms than others, particularly in the all important fields of purchasing.[9]

Schwarz Unternehmenstreuhand KG	
Klaus Gehrig	Komplementär (Sprecher)
Richard Meyer	Komplementär
Günter Fergen	int. Kommanditist
Werner Hoffmann	int. Kommanditist
Richard Lohmiller sen.	int. Kommanditist
Hans-Henning Offen	ext. Kommanditist
Gerhard Rüschen	ext. Kommanditist
Dr. Walther Zügel	ext. Kommanditist
Dieter Schwarz	a.o. Mitglied
Walter Herrmann	a.o. Mitglied
Kaufland Stiftung & Co. KG	
Günter Fergen	Vorstandsvorsitzender
Heinz Andrejewski	Vorstandsvorsitzender
Rainer Frömel	Vorstand
Richard Lohmiller jun.	Vorstand
Reinhold Scholz	Vorstand
Eckhard Südmersen	Vorstand
Rupert Schädler	Vorstand
Eckhard Südmersen	Vorstand
Rupert Schädler	Vorstand
Frank Lehmann	Vorstand
Armin Gärtner	Vorstand
Lidl Stiftung & Co. KG	
Klaus Gehrig	Geschäftsführer
Werner Hoffmann	Geschäftsführer
Gert Schambach	GF Einkauf Deutschland
Walter Pötter	GF Einkauf International
Karl-Heinz Holland	GF Einkauf International

Source: Lebensmittelzeitung

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[8] Handelsblatt, 5.2.2004

[9] http://www.lz-net.de 15.5.2003

Lidl

Lidl does not dissolve any information on its operations, nor does it give public statements or answer questions from media. It has developed this approach even further than Aldi. When German enterprises of a certain size were forced to give out financial information, Aldi began to do this for certain of its companies whereas Lidl split them up to avoid these obligations.[10]

Lidl grows both in Germany and in other parts of Europe. At home, the retailer is focusing particularly on the northern parts of Germany, where it has been less present than in the south. On the home market in Germany, Aldi is still almost three times larger than its competitor, with a turnover of 25 Billion Euro against 9.5 Billion for Lidl, even if the gap is closing.[11]

It is difficult to establish the exact growth rates for Lidl, and for market leader Aldi, as financial information on these two companies is not published. The consumer research institute Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung (GfK) estimated that Lidl's growth rate in 2003 was 12 per cent, whereas Aldi's was 5.5 per cent. Part of the large difference can be explained through the faster expansion of Lidl, which opened 422 new stores in 2003, against Aldi's 290. The growth difference in same store sales was therefore smaller.[12]

On the European level, Lidl has increased its turnover since 1998 with a staggering annual 15.1 per cent. Aldi, which has expanded slower in Europe has also booked an annual increase of 7.8 per cent during this five year period.[13]

German retailing is not doing well. Consumption is down and the competition in retail trade is particularly aggressive in Germany, with price margins razor thin. In this environment, it is the discounters such as Aldi and Lidl, which are most successful, taking market shares from others. The discounters are also at certain advantage because of the German legislation, which restrict or hinder the construction of new hypermarkets and other larger stores.

In 2003, the big losers in German retailing were the classic supermarkets, from which Aldi and Lidl were able to take away some 1.5 Billion Euro in sales. Since 1998, the market share of traditional food retailing has plummeted from 23.3 per cent whereas the discounters play the clearly leading role with 38.2 per cent of the market.[14]

But also other discounters had to see Lidl take away part of their sales. This, Aldi would have lost 156 Million Euro to its main competitor, while the other German discounters Plus (Tengelmann), Penny (Rewe) and Netto (Spar Germany) lost altogether 90 million Euro in turnover to Lidl.[15]

Traditional multi-format and supermarket retailers are rightly concerned with the expansion of hard discounting.

"To continue the downward price spiral can in the medium term not be in the interest of retailing, nor producers, and particularly not the consumers. Something like this will not fail to have an effect on the quality of food", said Hans Reischl,

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[10] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[11] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[12] Der Spiegel 24.2.2004

[13] McKinsey & Company February 2004

[14] Der Spiegel 24.2.2004

[15] Berliner Morgenpost 25.2.2004

president of the board of Germany's number two retailer Rewe. In a sense he is sitting on two chairs, as supermarket operator Rewe is also one of Europe's leading discounters, through its Penny Market chain.[16]

In February 2004, McKinsey published a report which said that classic supermarkets are not able to compete anymore: "The success of hard discounters Aldi and Lidl change traditional retailing and supermarkets more fundamentally than has been thought until now. The discounters' high growth rates cannot be explained only with low prices anymore. The discounters' business model is based on extreme simplicity, efficiency and speed. Thus Aldi and Lidl are visibly changing the shopping behaviour of the Germans", McKinsey says.[17]

"Supermarkets must orient themselves along the successful concepts of Aldi and Lidl. Only then do they have a chance to win back market shares with their own measures", says Michael Kliger, McKinsey Partner and Head of Retail Practice: "Smaller assortments, clearer shelves and faster shopping – Aldi and Lidl set standards, which the traditional commerce cannot bypass anymore."[18]

The McKinsey report says that in the supermarket of the future, customers can clearly differentiate between lower, intermediate and higher price groups. The assortment is broad only there were customers make use of it. Other product groups are covered by attractively priced but also quality-wise correct house brands. Food products for allergic persons and children, or bio products, make the assortment particularly attractive for new customer groups. The products are offered in an attractive way in the store, and shopping is made fast and comfortable for the customer.[19]

Tesco and Carrefour are two leading European multi-format retailers, who have already introduced differentiated product lines into their hypermarkets. Carrefour, which has had problems with the profitability of its French hypermarkets, has made it clear that they will focus more than earlier on hard discounting, and the company is expected particularly to expand its Dia hard discounter chain.

Through an aggressive price policy, Lidl tries to take market shares particularly from its main competitor Aldi. Spectacular special offers give the impression of particularly low prices, but normally they are applied only for short periods of time. Both competitors and consumer representatives have criticised the company for this approach, which they consider to be misleading and unserious marketing. In Spain, the consumers' organisation OCU reacted sharply when Lidl used its name in advertising, telling that they had been found by OCU to have the lowest prices. OCU called this "intolerable conduct".[20]

Lidl is indeed an Aldi copy. The focus on prices and the no frills concept are the same. But there are also important differences. The assortment is twice as large, there are brand products on the shelves and Lidl is carrying more fresh produce.

A German researcher commented on why Lidl carried more brand products than its competitors: "Lidl uses the brand products as a frequency generator. And they need these products to strengthen their image as a discounter. This is because

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[16] Lebensmittelzeitung

[17] McKinsey & Company February 2004

[18] McKinsey & Company February 2004

[19] McKinsey & Company February 2004

[20] http://www.ocu.org 18.7.2003

customers can only through brand name products compare with prices at Real and Edeka."[21]

"But prices and quality are unclear", says Dieter Brandes, manager and former member of the Aldi board to Süddeutsche Zeitung. "And one cannot reach productivity by standing behind ones employees with a whip in the hand. One has to improve the system."[22]

Suppliers are under hard pressure when Lidl is pushing prices down. "Whereas the deeply catholic Aldi-brothers become unpleasant only when there are quality problems, but otherwise are fair with their suppliers, the Lidl buyers exert enormous pressure", writes Managermagazin.[23] As Lidl is a very large buyer, few suppliers can afford to tell them off.

Lidl has also been faster than Aldi in reacting to changing consumer demands, such as introducing fresh meat into its assortment. From January to May 2003, the discounters in Germany have almost doubled their market share in packed meat, from 12 to 22 per cent.[24] Lidl is now selling unpacked vegetables and fruits whereas Aldi is not. Make-up products will be a novelty in Lidl's assortment from 2004.[25]

According to Lebensmittelzeitung, the Schwarz Group has a 20 per cent ratio of own capital and a sufficient net liquidity to finance its expansion. Often, new stores are financed by private investors. These provide the real estate for the stores on a long term basis and get a guaranteed income from this.[26]

A typical Lidl store in Germany is estimated to sell for 4 million Euro (4.5 million USD) per year. This corrects earlier estimates that average sales were 3 million Euro, and puts Lidl at par with Aldi.[27] Lidl's discount markets are said to bring in 3 per cent profits on the turnover, before taxes, which would be solid compared with industry averages in Germany.[28]

The company has paid more attention to providing sufficient car parking at its new stores in northern Germany than its archrival Aldi, helping it to take market shares.[29]

Longer shop opening hours than Aldi is another of Lidl's German competition approaches. When the Aldi stores close at 14.00, Lidl keeps its doors open until 20.00. Managermagazin says that this is made possible by the 20 per cent lower wages that Lidl is paying. The total amount of working hours that are allocated to a Lidl store are tied to turnover, which means that cashiers can be pressed to work additional hours without pay.[30]

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[21] Handelsblatt 5.2.2004

[22] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[23] Managermagazin 9/03

[24] http://wortschatz.uni-leipzig.de/wort-des-tages/2003/07/22/Discounter.html

[25] http://www.lz-net.de (Lebensmittelzeitung)

[26] Süddeutsche Zeitung 22.8.2003

[27] http://www.lz-net.de 15.5.2003

[28] Süddeutsche Zeitung 22.8.2003

[29] Managermagazin 9/03

[30] Managermagazin 9/03

Lidl's expansion abroad

Roughly half of Lidl's total sales are generated outside Germany. It is estimated that Lidl is now getting more income from outside Germany than from the home country itself. Its return on sales is estimated to average as much as 3 per cent, a rate, which it could not reach on the highly competitive German market. [31]

Lidl is present in the following countries:

- Germany
- Austria
- Belgium
- Czech Republic
- Finland
- France
- Ireland
- Italy
- Norway
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom

Within the next months, the company will open its first stores in Denmark.

In France, there are 1,050 Lidl stores and the French operation is said to be the company's most profitable one, bringing in a profit of at least 160 million Euro with sales amounting to 4.4[32] Billion Euro. Managermagazin characterises it as a veritable money machine.

Lidl came to France in 1988 when it opened a store in Colmar near the border to Germany. It then started to build a store network in eastern France, from where it soon expanded to the region north of Paris and later to the other parts of the country as well.

The average store size in France is 700 square metres. Because of zoning restrictions, which hindered Lidl from building a network of larger stores, the company developed a 'French' store concept where the normal assortment was crammed into 300 square meters. This meant that the cashier's points were shorter, the aisles were narrower and the shelves were higher than in the larger shops.[33]

Lidl is growing fast on the French market, as are other hard discounters. The company has even established itself in conjunction with some hypermarket parking places: - They even use our caddies, irritated management says. Even more seriously, hypermarket sales are stagnating or even shrinking, while hard discounting is increasing its market sales.

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[31] http://www.lz-net.de 10.6.2003

[32] http://www.managermagazin.de

[33] http://membres.lycos.fr/fabriceg95/D-LIDL-fiche.htm

In countries of Central and Eastern Europe, hypermarkets are still the most popular of the new store formats. However, discount stores are now gaining ground. Their position is particularly strong in smaller localities, which are not suited for the larger hypermarkets.[34]

In the autumn of 2003, Lidl opened 30 new markets in the Czech Republic, in a 'big bang'. In Sweden, Lidl's network comprises over 40 stores, and continues to expand. There are, however, signs that the company has not been as successful as was expected and has indeed started cutting personnel in some of its stores.

The company has also recently started operating in Norway.

Hungary and Slovenia will follow in 2004.

Also Denmark is on Lidl's expansion list. The discounter is thought to plan some 200 stores and has purchased a property in Kolding, where it will establish a distribution centre and its headquarters.[35] "A fox at the chicken farm", say the Danish cooperatives on their website.[36]

In 2003, on its website[37] in Germany, Lidl started to recruit young managers to be placed in Canada. The launch of the Canadian operations was put forward, or cancelled, early 2004. It was said that the company's expansion pace was so high that it needed to draw its breath before growing further.

Lidl in Finland

As part of its expansion, Lidl is continuously on the search for new store sites. On the company's Finnish website http://www.lidl.fi the discounter asks for offers, setting the following parameters:

- The locality should have at least 10,000 inhabitants – there are 101 localities that fill this requirement in Finland,
- The real estate property should be between 6,000 and 10,000 square meters and have good traffic connections,
- The sales area should be between 1,000 and 1,400 square meters and there should be the necessary storage and social facilities,
- There should be between 100 and 150 parking spaces.

Lidl opened its first store in Finland in October 2002, and has since then opened a new store almost every week. Its present network comprises 56 shops. In addition, the company has established a distribution centre, which is enormous for Finnish circumstances, 32,000 square meters. Another distribution centre is planned for northern Finland, which makes it clear that the store network will continue to grow.

The most recent reports indicate, however, that Lidl's market share in Finland has stopped growing, and has stagnated at 2 per cent. The country's largest retailer Kesko has recently established its own hard discount chain, to challenge the German competitor.

Lidl has some 900 workers in Finland today. Every store has a supervisor. 2 to 3 stores are grouped together to areas with an area supervisor. They report to two sales supervisors. In addition, the company has a managing director, an administrative director, a human resource director and office staff.

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[34] The Prague Post 11.9.2003

[35] Det Tysk-Danske Handelskammer website April 2003

[36] http://www.andelsselskab.dk 7.5.2003

[37] http://www.lidl.de

Employment conditions and labour relations in Lidl in Germany

In Lidl, management by pressure and fear is the approach to handling human resources. Hierarchies are strict, and creativity and initiative are discouraged. Management demands permanent availability from the personnel, and when someone gets ill, he or she can expect a home visit by a supervisor.

„For years she had stood out with all of this, the humiliations by customers, the constant lack of confidence", writes Süddeutsche Zeitung about a discussion with a former Lidl cashier, who worked ten years for the company. „When one was ill, one had to visit the district supervisor. After work, in her store, coats, handbags and cars were inspected. „Then I came always without a coat or handbag, I was afraid that they would put something into them", the ex-worker said: „One had to be on the job 15 minutes before the working time began. On Fridays, one did often not yet know when one should work on Monday."[38]

As a punishment, one could be placed for weeks in a store which was 80 kilometers away, the woman said. The cash machines are used to control the workers.[39]

Everyone had blood on their fingers because the cartons were piled so close to each other. And then the pressure from above, also on the store managers, who took holidays and still had to work to fill their quotas.[40]

There are almost only women workers at Lidl, most of them part-timers, many divorced, single parents, from the former GDR. "Then nobody protests. When one needs the money, one lets many things pass", says the former Lidl worker, who was interviewed by Süddeutsche Zeitung on the conditions of strict anonymity. Looking at her hands she says to the newspaper: "I know from what Dieter Schwarz has become so rich".[41]

A typical Lidl store in Germany employs between 10 and 12 staff. The cashiers, who often work part time, are paid according to tariffs. Their wages are on average 20 per cent lower than in Aldi, where the workers have additional wage benefits in addition to the basic minimum. [42]

Not surprisingly, like Wal-Mart, Lidl goes to great lengths to keep trade unions out. When ver.di tries to establish works councils, management moves fast to destroy these attempts. Workers are scared up by management – "and we can only protect shop stewards" says ver.di representative Christian Paulowitsch from Stuttgart to Süddeutsche Zeitung.[43]

In 2002, ver.di worked particularly hard to organise in Lidl. To make it impossible for the union to establish Works Councils (Gesamtbetriebsrat), management grouped the stores into more than 400 'independent' companies.

When the workers in seven Lidl stores in a region of Germany were invited to a meeting to set up an election committee for the works council election, nobody came. The workers had been invited by the company on the same day to an internal training session. Instead, managers and regional supervisors sat as a threatening panel in the meeting room. "The message was clear", says ver.di's

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[38] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[39] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[40] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[41] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[42] Handelsblatt 5.2.2004

[43] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

regional secretary in Hamm, Norbert Glassman. “Who comes, will be shaved away”.[44]

When union representatives have tried to make Dieter Schwarz himself to intervene, he has let them be told that he has pulled back from operative management. A ver.di representative said to Süddeutsche Zeitung that strictly legally he is out, but “as before, he is the godfather.” Christian Paulowitsch says: “He has never yet dirtied his fingers”[45]

“Schwarz gave over the management of his empire simultaneously to two chief executives, but still workers tell about how his presence in the stores can still be felt, unchanged: In many warehouses and many stores, he has already showed up unexpectedly, to look after his rights.[46]

Labour relations experiences in Lidl Finland

Already one year before the company established itself, PAM was informed by UNI Commerce about the company and about the experiences of other trade unions in dealing with it. The union’s leaders met the management of LIDL Suomi Ky, who ensured the union that they intended to respect national legislation and the collective agreement for commerce. Soon, the company also joined the commerce employers’ association.

It did not take long after the first shops were opened that workers started to contact the union’s regional offices. Problems were encountered particularly as managers did not have the skills to plan work schedules, but also with the behaviour of shop supervisors. Because of fundamental flaws in working time planning, employees accumulated claims on pay for additional and overtime hours. These problems were soon out in the public although the company did not comment on them.

In February 2003, the commerce employers association KTL, PAM and the LIDL management met to seek solutions to the problems. A negotiating timetable about these issues was agreed, to seek solution without having to go to court – the claims were so clear that management did really not have any alternative. At the same time, the shop steward structures were agreed – however, only to the minimum levels set by general rules.

LIDL has not been openly hostile to trade unions in Finland. Top management says that they are committed to applying legislation and the collective agreement for commerce, but of course they have no alternatives. They acknowledge the collective agreement system, but want to apply it as well as the agreement on shop stewards at minimum levels.

The real problems have been encountered, and are still encountered, at shop floor levels. Many young people without experience from commerce have been employed as shop supervisors. Work scheduling continue to cause problems, as well as other incompetence by supervisors, which leads to exaggerations.

Management is fast to use written warnings in situations which normally should be resolved through discussion. Strange behaviour can be seen in numerous individual cases, but they resemble each other so much in different parts of the country that

[44] Süddeutsche Zeitung 28.8.2003

[45] Süddeutsche Zeitung 1.12.2003

[46] Süddeutsche Zeitung 28.8.2003

they send a clear signal: Management has instructed supervisors to apply a strictly control-based approach.

In Finnish circumstances, it appears strange that workers are required to be always prepared to show a receipt even for lunch food – otherwise he or she is accused of stealing the product. Workers have also been forbidden to serve relatives or people they know, as customers.

The atmosphere in LIDL cannot be called open, trustful and discussing. This is confirmed also by the many anonymous letters that the union is now receiving. Before LIDL came, this kind of letters were very rare.

As to wages, LIDL applies the collective agreement for commerce, but it must be remembered that they do not have any alternative but to do this, as the labour legislation makes the agreement generally applicable throughout the whole industry, regardless of membership in an employers association or trade union. In fact, LIDL pays just a little over the minimum wage levels as established in the collective agreement.

In February 2004, LIDL, PAM and KTL met again, after one year. Regrettably, it had to be said that the messages from workplaces continued to be negative, although no big conflicts had been brought to the level between management and PAM. No conflicts have been taken to court, claims have always been paid when their correctness has been established in negotiations.

The problem is also not that LIDL would violate legislation and collective agreements. Most of the instructions and interdictions to employees are not as such in conflict with legislation or the collective agreement. It is only that they do not traditionally belong to the Finnish working life culture.

Labour relations experiences in other countries

UNI Commerce has received reports on labour relations in Lidl in different countries. This document will be complemented from those reports, as well as through country reports and discussions at the UNI Commerce Lidl Conference in Tampere, Finland on 1 – 2 April 2004.