

OVERVIEW

■ EZA starting seminar in Bratislava

55 seminars are planned under EZA's Educational Programme for the 2012 budget year. Focuses: structural challenges in the labour market, the European Commission's Europe 2020 Strategy, the consequences of sovereign debt on social security and the job market, the demographic challenges for the labour market, vocational education and social security systems in Europe *Page 2*

■ Strengthen social dialogue in the Balkans

Strengthening social dialogue in the Balkans was the aim of the meeting with representatives of EZA member centres from the FYR Macedonia and Croatia during the EZA start seminar *Page 3*

■ Become fit to assert workers' rights



24 young representatives of workers' organisations and trade unions attended the 4th course of a training cycle in October. The focal issue was ethics *Page 3*

■ EZA wishes you...

...a happy and successful 2012

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

The last EU Crisis Summit was regarded as a "breakthrough to a new stability union". Brakes on national debt and automatic penalties for deficit sinners represent the beginning of a solution. It is to be hoped that this is a timely signal for being able to overcome the national debt crisis in the long run. But these can only be the first of many measures. The feeling of insecurity among workers is as evident as ever, because we are all aware that it is not just a national debt crisis to be overcome but

also a multi-layered public finance crisis. Besides intelligent compulsory austerity measures what is crucial is an active economic policy and a prudent, coherent fiscal policy. What demand-oriented incentives can be created in the individual countries? Finally, the strictly regulated austerity policy required must not be allowed to have a counterproductive impact – look at Greece. And employment has to be increased, not cut back, a return to nation states must be prevented and social peace safeguarded. It is a Herculean task that demands greater sense of community of the European Union. The EZA member centres feel a high degree of responsibility for rising to these challenges. The Management Board and my staff in the secretariat wish you, your families and friends a good start to the New Year in 2012.
Yours,
Roswitha Gottbehüt
Secretary-General

EZA project co-ordination 2011: compatibility of family and job

The further development of the European social model and future societal development in the EU member states will be massively contingent upon how compatibility policies are implemented and what importance is attached to them on a European and national level. For this reason workers' organisations ought to press in collective bargaining for further framework agreements on flexitime and the introduction of telework; they should put concrete compatibility measures into practice in their own organisations; and they should call on employers to implement such measures – for mutual economic benefit – in order to achieve a better work-life balance.

These are a few of the results of the EZA project co-ordination 2011 on the issue of compatibility of family and work in

which the EZA member centres Krifa, CIFOTIE, LOC/MTC, NSi, CEEFT and CFTC are involved. During the project co-ordination it also became clear that the achievement of a better balance between private and working life presupposes a holistic approach, one that considers the entire reality of workers' lives and necessitates incorporating various players – social partners, companies, municipalities and local authorities, those responsible for making family policies, and the families themselves.

Michael Schwarz ■

EZA starting seminar in Bratislava



Panel at the EZA starting seminar in Bratislava. From left to right: Norbert Klein, EZA; Prof. Milan Katuninec, University of Trnava; Piergiorgio Sciacqua, EZA Co-President; Lubica Černá, President of NKOS; Bartho Pronk, EZA President

Key Elements of the European Social Dialogue” – this was the subject of the starting seminar that was hosted by the European Centre for Workers’ Questions (“Europäisches Zentrum für Arbeitnehmerfragen” EZA) on 1 and 2 December 2011 in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava. The seminar, organized in close cooperation with the Independent Christian Trade Union Federation of Slovakia (Nezávislé kresťanské odbory Slovenska NKOS) and with support from the European Union to discuss EZA’s educational programme for 2012, was attended by 120 representative of Christian-social employee organizations from 25 European countries. It emerged that the new year’s educational programme will place particular emphasis on “Structural challenges on the labour market” – 18 out of a total of 55 planned projects will deal with this subject.

The Europe 2020 strategy of the European Commission will provide another focus for the new programme. The EZA membership centres plan to concentrate their particular attention on the fight against poverty and the social exclusion of workers.

Furthermore, two coordinated projects are planned for 2012: one under the heading “The consequences of sovereign debt on social security and the labour market”, the other dedicated to “Demographic challenges for the labour market, vocational education and social security systems in Europe”.

As in the previous year the educational programme was presented with theme-oriented videos, followed by an open and very lively round-table discussion between trade union representatives

from various European regions and the audience.

The speech made by Prof. Milan Katuninec from Trnava was extremely well received: in his view the Europe 2020 Strategy forecasts made little men-

In their contributions the seminar-goers called for a common strategy to overcome the crisis, the maintenance of social security and a return to shared values in Europe. Europe should not, it was agreed, design solutions for the crisis at the



Open round-table discussion on the key issues of the 2012 budget year between trade union representatives from various European regions and the audience

tion of the people that would be living in the future, and criticised the fact that in his social position man was regarded too much as a consumer - an approach that workers’ organisations ought to counter. Ellen Durst from the European Commission’s Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion in her presentation on “The Europe 2020 Strategy in motion – how the social dialogue can be strengthened” stressed the importance of capacity building for workers’ organisations (there will be a detailed feature on this in EZA News 2/2012).

expense of the weaker member states. Minimum wages were seen as the key to resolving the issue of the working poor. Discussions also focused on the black market for labour, the shadow economy, labour law amendments in times of economic crisis and the determination of some employers to make their employees sign up to a status of merely formal or “bogus” self-employment. ■

Strengthening the Social Dialogue in the Balkan States



Strengthening social dialogue in the Balkans was the aim of the meeting with representatives of EZA member centres from FYR Macedonia and Croatia during the EZA starting seminar

One key focus for EZA and its membership centres in the coming year will be the Social Dialogue across the Balkan region.

The latest starting seminar early December in the Slovakian capital of Bratislava provided the EZA partner organizations from the region with ample opportunities of meeting representatives from centres that work closely together

with organizations in the Balkan states. Together, they discussed possible strategies of how to strengthen employee organizations and civil society associations that might have an impact on the Social Dialogue.

EZA-President Bartho Pronk recommended to make good use of the projects that have been planned for the region during the coming year. Co-President Piergiorgio

Sciacqua emphasized the key importance of civil society organizations in the Balkan states, pointing out their contributions to the creation of the structures for a Social Dialogue and advocating their close integration into EZA's plans.

As an initial step, it is planned to make an inventory of all existing contacts and activities before deciding what specific areas will be targeted in the future.

EZA is not the only major organization that has identified a need for a coordinated strategy to improve the Social Dialogue in this region: Jean-Paul Tricart from the European Commission (Head of Unit, Social Dialogue and Industrial Relations), recently announced his intention to focus his department's attention more closely on the Balkan states and encouraged EZA-President Bartho Pronk and Secretary-General Roswitha Gottbehüt during a meeting in November to intensify their efforts in this region. ■

Train the leader! – A training course for young trade union leaders

The labour market is still changing, so trade unions should as well. In order to be able to face the challenges of an ever-changing labour market, trade unions need to train their members. Special attention has to be paid to young representatives of trade unions. They have to acquire new skills, update their knowledge, learn new solutions and exchange ideas. But acquiring technical skills does not mean they can forget the basic and most important values of trade union work. For this reason the last training seminar of the whole cycle of four courses was devoted to values in the work and trade union activities. All trade union activities should be planned and implemented ethically. It is essential!

Conflicts of values, axiology of work, liberalism and capitalism towards in the world of labour, human and social rights, specific issues related to collective bargaining, ethics and efficiency in negotia-

tions, axiology of the European Union in the context of workers' rights – these were the topics of the training course organised between 9 and 15 October 2011 in Lublin, Poland.

24 young trade unionists from NSZZ "Solidarność" and EDS-FNS from Poland, USO from Spain as well as Fidestra and CFTL from Portugal took part in the training. It was a time of very intensive learning and exchange of experiences; during the classes the theory was mixed with practical exercises. In addition to the course, a meeting of the project partners was held in order to evaluate the last course and the whole project, as well as to plan an online course and the future cooperation between the organisations involved.

Marta Jędrych ■

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European Centre for Workers' Questions

Johannes-Albers-Allee 2

53639 Königswinter

Tel. +49 - 22 23 - 29 98 - 0

Fax +49 - 22 23 - 29 98 - 22

E-mail: eza@eza.org

www.eza.org

Editorial team

Roswitha Gottbehüt (editor-in-chief),

Matthias Homey, Norbert Klein,

Victoria Znined

Design and composition

HellaDesign, Emmendingen

E-mail: helladesign@web.de

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