

OVERVIEW

■ European social dialogue

Retrospective of the EZA Education and Training Programme 2012, the start of the 2013 Education and Training year, and a look forward to the content for 2014

Page 2

■ MCL/EFAL: Activities in the Mediterranean

Focal countries: Morocco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Holy Land and Jordan

Page 3

■ Anniversary: 25th KGZE in Vienna



An indispensable forum for dialogue, exchange and mutual respect: from sponsorship to genuine partnership

Page 4

■ Anniversary: 20 years of NKOS



Speech by guest of honour Ján Figel', former EU Commissioner and current Chairman of the Christian Democratic party KDH; tribute to the founder members and the first NKOS President Milan Katuninec

Page 4

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

The move to reduce the high youth unemployment rate in Europe is gaining momentum at last: the European Commission, heads of government, ministers of employment and education, as well as social partners are trying to set up high-quality vocational training systems to overcome country specific problems and promote European mobility. Yet who is really setting the true agenda? If you read the documents pro-

duced by the European Commission and employer organisations, you see that the terms "vocational training" and "economisation" are used in the same breath. Vocational training cannot and must not be conceived as a "means to an end", not even in times of crisis. The young person is the priority. For him/her, vocational orientation means life orientation first and foremost. Respect for him/her must be the main priority, not added value. Equal opportunities in education & training and permeability in the systems are indispensable. They give young people the prospects they need for their life. What is more, experiencing respect in vocational training motivates them to take responsibility. This in turn is transferred to society as a whole. Will we manage to put European vocational training on the "right track"?

*Yours,
Roswitha Gottbehüt
Secretary-General*

EZA Delegation in Serbia and in Bosnia and Herzegovina

An EZA delegation consisting of President Barthe Pronk, Co-President Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Treasurer Norbert Schnedl, Administration Member Marija Hanževački, General Secretary Roswitha Gottbehüt and Education Secretary Norbert Klein will pay a working visit to Serbia and to Bosnia and Herzegovina from 27 to 28 August 2013.

In Belgrade, the delegation will meet Ljubisav Orbvić, president of CATUS/SSSS (Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia / Savez samostalnih sindikata Srbije) and Branislav Ćanak, chairman of the trade union confederation "Nezavisnost". In Sarajevo, a meeting with the president of the EZA member centre HKD NAPREDAK, Franjo

Topić, and a further meeting with the High Commissioner for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Valentin Inzko, are planned. ■

EZA Education and Training Programme “European Social Dialogue”

Completion of the 2012 budget year

71 education and training activities involving a total of 3,879 participants were carried out in the 2012 budget year. 44% of the participants came from the EU 12 and the candidate countries.

A special project for workers' organisations in the Western Balkan started with a seminar and nine other events. Capacity-building measures are of particular importance in the region. Trade unions are often denied the full exercise of their rights and have to face considerable resistance from the government.

Throughout Europe trade unions are now confronted with new challenges: firstly, falling numbers of members; and secondly, the worrying impact of the crisis on the European labour markets means that previous positions have to be revised and new strategic approaches found.

The struggle against poverty and social exclusion was the focus of the ten-seminar series of projects on the “Europe 2020” strategy, which was again supervised academically by HIVA. A minimum wage, education and training, guaranteed access to further training and professional development, social security and comprehensive health services, combating the underground economy and better distribution of work by reducing general working hours can contribute to quality employment and help reduce poverty.

Projects were co-ordinated on the subject of “The impact of public debt on social security and the labour market”. The way out of the crisis is not through cuts in public spending on education, social protection and public services, but through investments in the labour market and in the social sphere.

Projects were also co-ordinated on the subject of “Demographic challenges for the labour market, vocational training and social security systems in Europe”. Lifelong learning and ongoing vocational training – including on-the-job training – are becoming increasingly important, jobs subject to statutory social insurance contributions must be promoted and precarious work reduced to ensure the financing of the social security systems. 15% of Europeans – primarily young people – are already affected by precarious

work. In view of this, the call was for an improvement in vocational training and a better transition from vocational training to the world of work.

Trade unions must work more closely together for integration to succeed. Quality vocational training and recognition of vocational qualifications acquired in the countries of origin facilitate integration in the labour market and in society.

The first cycle of education and training courses, which started in 2009, ended with an online course and a closing seminar. A second cycle, oriented to the Central and Eastern Europe region, was started.

Current budget year

The 2013 budget year commenced with the 25th Conference for Trade Union Cooperation in Europe (KGZE) organised by ÖZA. Since then there have been 21 (out of a total 68) education and training events already.

The series of seminars on the “Europe 2020” strategy is continuing, again with the academic assistance of HIVA. The focus this year is on the EU employment package and the question of how workers' organisations can play their part in more, good work in the three future sectors of the green economy, health and care services, information and communication technologies.

Projects are being co-ordinated on the topics of “Prospects for trade union action in Europe during and after the crisis: challenges, strategic approaches, self-image and positioning” and “Compatibility of job and private life put to the test”.

The second cycle of education and training courses targeted at leading multipliers from workers' organisations in Poland, Lithuania and Romania is being continued with courses in Lithuania and Romania.

In view of the high rate of youth unemployment in Europe, an EZA working group is carrying on studying the question of how the vocational training of young people can be improved and how the transition from vocational training to a permanent contract of employment can be achieved. This issue will also be on the

agenda of the fourth Conference of Young Workers in Europe being held in September.

As part of the ongoing development of improving the quality of seminars, in 2013 EZA is concentrating on applying participative methods and on evaluating seminars. To this end, partnerships between an education and training expert and the respective Project Manager were formed for five seminars.

Outlook for 2014

30 June 2013 was the closing date for project applications to be submitted to EZA for the 2014 budget year, for which EZA had suggested four focal issues to its member centres: 1. “Europe 2020” strategy: combating youth unemployment through good offers of vocational training; 2. The importance of social dialogue – How do you know when social dialogue is working well? – The system as a whole; 3. Employment problems exacerbate the welfare situation; 4. Mobility and migration in Europe.

MCL/EFAL: Being there in the Mediterranean in support of the dialogue



Inauguration of the Multimedia Centre financed by MCL/EFAL for dialogue in Sarajevo in July 2011. From left to right: Carlo Costalli, President of MCL, Franjo Topic, President of Napredak, Antonio Inchingoli, General Secretary of MCL

For many years the EZA member centre MCL/EFAL (Movimento Cristiano Lavoratori/Ente Nazionale per la Formazione e l'Addestramento dei Lavoratori) has been active in the basic and on-the-job training of workers, primarily in the social and intercultural domain, throughout the Mediterranean. This orientation is the direct result of its European commitment, which has always determined the movement, as well as its awareness of the living conditions and the countless difficulties that determine the life of workers abroad: in the past it was many Italians outside Italy, now it is many people coming from the southern Mediterranean to Italy.

MCL/EFAL promotes initiatives to support dialogue with many Mediterranean regions and in the last few years has been concentrating on three areas: Morocco, Bosnia-Herzegovina, the Holy Land and Jordan.

Its conviction that a concrete presence is necessary for meaningful dialogue has resulted in MCL/EFAL being actively represented in the various situations in which the movement operates.

Morocco

Through the CEFA (Comitato Europeo per la Formazione e l'Agricoltura), MCL/

EFAL's NGO, MCL/EFAL helped to erect an oil mill and to set up a School of Agriculture for Women in the south of Morocco. Recently the movement opened its own office in Rabat to assist the training of workers emigrating to Italy.

Bosnia-Herzegovina

In Bosnia-Herzegovina MCL/EFAL has been working together with the workers' organisation Napredak for many years. The top priority is the promotion of European integration. In Sarajevo, over a period of ten years MCL/EFAL has supported many initiatives in collaboration with Napredak to promote intercultural dialogue and to drive the social dialogue forward – indispensable for the many workers still excluded from a democratic world of work. Setting up a permanent branch office, inaugurated by the head of state and by Cardinal Vinco Puljić in 2011, gave MCL/EFAL the opportunity to run seminars and training schemes for young workers of all religious affiliations.

The Holy Land and Jordan

In the Holy Land, MCL/EFAL funds seminarians and supports various joint ventures in collaboration with the Patriarch of Jerusalem, Monsignor Fouad Twal.

Last year during a pilgrimage of 300 MCL members, led by President Carlo Costalli, MCL/EFAL helped set up a Home for Young Christians to encourage them to stay in Jerusalem.

This year MCL/EFAL is supporting the Catholic University of Madaba in Jordan, founded at the request of Benedict XVI and recently inaugurated by King Abdullah II. MCL/EFAL feels it is especially important to support academic life, and to encourage the education and training of many young workers from the Middle East ambitious for management positions.

However, these are not the only initiatives in which MCL/EFAL is involved: reflecting the church's social teaching the movement also supports numerous smaller local projects.

Piergiorgio Sciacqua ■



Carlo Costalli, President of MCL, and Fouad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, during the pilgrimage of 300 leading MCL/EFAL representatives to Jerusalem in March 2012. During their stay the shell construction of 80 flats for young couples was inaugurated in Jerusalem, which MCL funded on the occasion of its 40th anniversary

25th KGZE in Vienna

Last April saw the 25th Conference on Trade Union Cooperation in Europe (KGZE). The first KGZE in spring 1989 – even before the collapse of the Communist system throughout Central and Eastern Europe – gave a boost to the new democratic movements in the weeks before the fall of the “Iron Curtain”. Since then the dialogue between the Christian Democrat trade unions of Western Europe and the non-Socialist trade unions of the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe has become an indispensable forum for dialogue, exchange and mutual respect. It is now possible to say that what was sponsorship has turned into genuine partnership! On the occasion of the anniversary on 18 April 2013 in Vienna's Hofburg Palace, the President of the Christian Trade Unionists of Austria and Vice-President of the Austrian Trade Union Federation Dr. Norbert Schnedl welcomed more than 160 conference-goers from 23 European countries and, as special guests of honour, EU-Commissioner Dr. Johannes Hahn, Vice-Chancellor Dr. Michael Spindellegger, National Assembly Speaker and President of the Civil Service Trade Union Fritz Neugebauer, as well as the High Representative of the United Nations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Dr. Valentin Inzko.



Plenary session at the ceremony celebrating the 25th KGZE at Vienna's Hofburg in April 2013

Dr. Michael Spindellegger emphasised that apart from all talk of crises the focus had to be put back on what great opportunities the European Union offered its citizens. After all, the EU continued to be a peace project, from a security and economic policy view.

Dr. Johannes Hahn underlined the necessity of strong trade union co-operation on a European level, which was of great importance as a “mirror image of and counterweight to” the economic associations.

Fritz Neugebauer stressed: “There is no freedom without solidarity.” This message was, he said, not just a conclusion, but more than anything a mission: “Social dialogue is never a completed process, it

has to be cultivated and driven forward time and again.”

Dr. Norbert Schnedl made it clear: “Free trade unions are the guarantors of freedom, respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. That is why this historic process and the founding of the KGZE was and still is so important.”

For more information and photos go to www.fcg.at

Andreas Gjecaj ■

20 Years of NKOS

During a seminar on “Health and safety at work in the European labour market – the latest trends. How does social dialogue influence working conditions?” on 7 May 2013, the Confederation of Independent Christian Trade Unions of Slovakia NKOS (Nezávislé kresťanské odbory Slovenska) celebrated its 20th anniversary. The focus was on the commemorative speech made by guest of honour Ján Figel', former EU Commissioner and current Chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement KDH, and on the tribute to the founder members and the first NKOS President Milan Katuninec by Lubica Černá, the current President of NKOS. In his speech, Katuninec, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Trnava, reviewed the last 20 years and stressed: “The core agenda of trade unions must remain focused on

issues regarding the capital and labour relationship, in the current economic crisis it should not be ignored, especially regarding the issue of rising unemployment as well as other topics related to social policy and activities of partners, due to dealing with actual human destinies that are not just statistics.”

NKOS, a member of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), consists of three sectoral associations: Education and Science, the Metal Industry, and Transport. There is also a youth organisation. The priorities of their work are sectoral and company-level social dialogue and activities relating to welfare, education, culture and religion. At present they are preparing the next congress, which is being held in 2014.

Lubica Černá ■

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