

Eurofedop is 50 years young

On 20 September 2016, Eurofedop (European Federation of Employees in Public Services) celebrated its 50th anniversary in the city where it all began: the organisation was created in Vienna (Austria) in 1966. Over the years, the organisation became known in particular for the work of its trade councils. In cooperation with EZA, Eurofedop organises a members' meeting each year in a different location in Europe to discuss the problems relevant to the public service sector in Europe.

At the prestigious Vienna "Hofburg" palace, the federation welcomed a great number of prominent guests for its solemn anniversary celebration. Speakers included Wolfgang Schüssel, former Austrian Chancellor (2000-2007), Raf Chanterie, former Member of the European Parliament (1981-1999) and Member of the Committee on Social Affairs and Employment, as well as Fritz Neugebauer, President of Eurofedop (since 2002). EZA was represented by EZA President Bartho Pronk.

To celebrate its 50th anniversary, Eurofedop produced a book on the history of the federation. Secretary General Bert Van Caelenberg presented the book and brought back to mind the people and

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

Violence at work? Not in our company! That's the stock reaction when the issue is raised. A recent study proves that companies in Europe massively underestimate the risk of discrimination on the grounds of age, gender or ethnic origin. Two thirds of the companies surveyed regarded themselves as well equipped with preventative measures. And yet violence at work is by no means a singular phenomenon.

It ranges from physical violence, which includes sexual assaults, to (often very

subtle) verbal and non-verbal forms or structural discrimination. Men and women are affected, with women clearly experiencing violence more often.

Incidents of violence at work are frequently made a taboo issue or trivialised as an individual, emotional problem of those affected. This grossly violates their integrity and decency, with them often suffering from health consequences for many years after the incident of violence.

The impact on companies and society is also huge: a strain on the working atmosphere, losses of productivity, and considerable costs for the health system.

There is an urgent need for the taboo to be broken and people to be made aware of what is going on! Violence at work is not a private matter; it is an issue of corporate culture and decent work, a management issue for company and trade union leaders alike.

*Sigrid Schraml
Secretary General*

activities that have been important for the organisation. He also spoke about the future and underlined the importance of

maintaining good relations with the EU institutions. Moreover, he referred to the basic principles that serve as motivation for the organisation and its members: the Christian faith and the ideas expressed by Pope Leo XIII in his encyclical *Rerum Novarum*. In the next few years, Eurofedop wants to focus on assisting its member organisations from Central and Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans in developing basic trade union activities.

Bert Van Caelenberg ■



Guests of honour at Eurofedop's 50th anniversary at Vienna's Hofburg Palace. First row from left to right: Dr. Wolfgang Brandstetter (Austrian Federal Minister of Justice), Dr. Wolfgang Schüssel (former Federal Chancellor of Austria), Fritz Neugebauer (President of Eurofedop), Bert Van Caelenberg (Secretary General of Eurofedop), Annie Reynvoet (Bert Van Caelenberg's spouse), Bartho Pronk (EZA President), Dr. Norbert Schnedl (Federal Chairman of FCG, EZA Treasurer), Karl Nehammer (Secretary General of ÖAAB), Dr. Wilhelm Gloss (Eurofedop Treasurer)

EZA member organisations take part in European Commission's consultation on the Pillar of Social Rights

As a result of the biggest economic crisis in decades, the European Commission has made "A Deeper and Fairer Economic and Monetary Union" one of its priorities. Four areas have been put forward where further integration and consolidation is needed. The social dimension of an ever closer European Union is one of these areas. On 8 March 2016, Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, Marianne Thyssen, presented the "Pillar of Social Rights" and launched a consultation on this initiative.

The pillar of what?

The current proposal contains an outline of the existing EU "social acquis". The aim of the pillar is to define a number of principles that underpin well-functioning and fair labour markets and welfare systems. The proposal does not contain any draft legislation but suggest new areas of action for the European institutions and additional benchmarks to screen the employment and social performance. In addition, the initiative lays down key principles and shared values.

The consultation

The consultation is an occasion to evaluate existing EU legislation in the social and employment fields and to identify fundamental gaps. Moreover, the Commission would like to gather feedback on the outline of the pillar and to know whether the proposed pillar suits the new trends in work patterns. As President Juncker indicated "I will expect social partners to play a central role in this process", EZA has taken the initiative to call upon its members to participate in the consultation process.

EZA member organisations

Serbian trade union **SS Bofos** indicated unemployment as the most pressing employment and social priority. Especially technological change and digitisation of work will cause job losses and might put pressure on social rights. **SS Bofos** indicated that existing social protection schemes are incompatible with various forms of (new) work. Existing standards should be updated to the changes in the world of work. The German vocational training system was



recommended as a good practice in enabling young people not only to graduate with a degree but with job experience and knowledge of their trade. **SS Bofos** considers social dialogue to be a critical domain for renewed convergence for the euro zone. If social dialogue is well developed, many employment-related challenges can be dealt with through this mechanism. The Serbian observer recommends "transferring" good practices from member states with a strong social dialogue to member states where social dialogue is not sufficiently developed.

The **Association of Christian Artists** considers forced self-employment as the most pressing employment and social issue. Certain jobs lack any kind of social protection and the trade union is pleased to see that the Commission recognises this sizeable employment protection gap in its Staff Working Document. Demographic trends, new skills requirements and new ways of work are considered as the most transformative trends. They put pressure on the solidarity embedded in our social security systems, education systems are not adapted to new skills requirements, and new forms of (self)-employment emerge.

Both **SS Bofos** and the Association of Christian Social Artists raise an underlying question when stating that legislation is not adapted to new forms of employment, namely the definition of who is a worker and of who is eligible for social benefits and under what conditions. EZA is therefore happy to see that the European Commission diagnoses this tension in the Staff Working Document on "Key economic employment and social trends behind a European Pillar of Social Rights".

The Belgian **CET (Centre Européen du Travail)** has presented recommendations resulting from European projects on training and inclusion of low-skilled young workers:

- Support integrated training combining practical work experience and learning
- Support interactive learning, including practical and informal skills
- Improve learning outcomes of internships, encouraging real collaboration between schools and businesses
- Mainstream social inclusion in public procurement.

Other EZA member organisations are still in the process of preparing their response to the consultation.

Esmeralda Van den Bosch ■

New approaches in the geriatric care and nursing sector: protecting the health of carers and nurses

Flagship project in European co-operation

Having run for two years, the project “The world of work in 2020 – psychosocial consequences of the structural change in work in a European comparison – efficient instruments for salutogenesis in companies and organisations operating in the geriatric care and nursing sector”, in which EZA was involved as a partner institution, came to a successful conclusion in August 2016.

In a final conference organised by EZA member centre Nell-Breuning-Haus (NBH), the results of this Erasmus+ project were presented in Herzogenrath/Germany. Before then, organisations from Belgium, Germany, Estonia, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland and Romania had collaborated to study the health at work of home carers and nurses.

“We must not allow carers and nurses to collapse under their burden. So it is important for us to create attractive and healthy working conditions for them”, explained Member of the European Parliament Sabine Verheyen, one of the two patrons of the project. According to the MEP, in the World of Work 2020 project the “challenges in the healthcare and geriatric care sector” were addressed in a targeted and exemplary manner – “across national borders!”.

In the course of the project the health risks and strains on the health of carers and nurses were surveyed with a questionnaire in institutions in six of the countries involved in the project. Afterwards the results were discussed with those institutions, and an education and training concept was drawn up on this basis. This enables those employed in the care sector to protect their own health and prevent corresponding risks. These include damage to the back and musculoskeletal system. According to academic surveys, carers and nurses have to move heavy loads more often than construction workers.

At the same time these employees are also under huge psychosocial strain. This strain is due both to the stress-inducing pressure of time under which carers and nurses do their work and to permanently dealing with the death and suffering that face them on a daily basis.



Participants at the final conference held in the Nell-Breuning-Haus (NBH), Herzogenrath / Germany. Photo: Axel Gauster, Copyright: 2016 Nell-Breuning-Haus, Herzogenrath

The education and training concept presented at the conference is of a modular structure, enabling it to be used in initial training as well as in further and ongoing training for carers and nurses. During the project the curriculum was tested in two training courses, partly to ensure that it will be successful under the differing conditions in various European countries.

How important home care and maintaining the health of the people working in this sector is, was also underlined by the Minister for Health, Equality, Care and the Elderly of the German federal state of North Rhine Westphalia, Barbara Steffens, who was co-patron of the project. Even if in her federal state the number of workers entering the care sector has gone up recently, the most important thing is to keep them permanently in their profession. This entails making the profession more attractive.

From the outset the “World of Work 2020” project also considered the fact that maintaining the health of carers and nurses can be promoted not only in education and training. The general conditions in which care work is done are also of importance. That is why an additional project result is a raft of recommendations for the social partners and for policy-makers.

Based on the practical experiences discussed in the project, this document drawn up mainly by EZA shows in which areas social partners should act. Accordingly, when collective wage agreements are drafted the primary focus

should be on working hours, and the wage level for this demanding work ought to be considered as well. Attention should be paid both to greater compatibility of private life and work and to the intensification of work that is often damaging to health. In the project it became clear that concrete measures and strategies for preventing stress have the best impact when they are integrated in the working routine. Hence the social partners ought to agree working time and break regulations that enable the employees to put them into practice during work time.

For politicians the main challenges are in designing the funding of care and the way in which care work is remunerated. According to the experiences from the project, working hours, working conditions and work practices are often determined less by what would be necessary for promoting the carers’ and nurses’ health and more by what is financially feasible.

This also leads to the fundamental question of what value societies in Europe place on care.

Norbert Klein ■

EZA as the focus of a research paper

As part of the Master's degree course "Extracurricular education" focusing on "Extracurricular adult education" (Justus Liebig University, Gießen), in August and September 2016 completed a four-week internship at the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA).

On the strength of my interest in qualitative research, I was given the opportunity to create a research project on "Intercultural education and training: language as an instrument of the social dialogue on a European level". The aim of the research project proposed by EZA was to set out how the choice and use of a language create the conditions for learning and a resultant learning success.

This encompasses both the question of the criteria for organisers selecting language combinations in education and training seminars carried out under EZA's "European Social Dialogue" education and training programme and the question of the relevance of languages chosen to seminar participation.

To this end I recorded the actual language combinations for the education and training seminars held in the 2015/2016 education and training seminar year, and scrutinised and interpreted these data by means of pre-formulated hypotheses. The hypotheses included: "The theme of a seminar is crucial to the decision to attend the seminar, irrespective of the languages used", and "A key criterion for attending a seminar is that one's mother tongue is used in the seminar."

By comparing the data I gathered with those of the previous year I was able to analyse a period, enabling further interpretation.

The core of my research was interviews with seven representatives of workers' organisations from the EZA network involved in the "Make effective use of education and training work to strengthen the social dialogue in Europe!" seminar organised by EZA in conjunction with the KSI (Catholic Social Institute) in Bad Honnef in September 2016. The aim of the interviews was to find out on what basis the education and training centres chose the languages they used in their

seminars. To that end I examined to what extent the choice of languages used restricts the likelihood of attending a seminar. I also wanted to find out whether and how strongly the organisers debate the selection of language combinations in their seminars, whether they proceed along the lines of a tried and tested method or if they adapt changes in the languages used to the participants registered.



Sandra Baum

On the basis of this survey I was able to establish that, generally speaking, instead of being set on specific languages, the organisers would like to offer additional languages in their seminars. It was evident, however, that the funds available were often felt to be an obstacle. The cooperation with the interpreters – from as early as the preparation stage – was described as key to the successful design of a seminar.

My analysis of the results also showed that seminar-goers are quite happy to attend education and training seminars that are not conducted in their mother tongue. Moreover, I ascertained that although languages are selected making allowance for the themes, languages which participants indicate beforehand on the registration form as language of conversation are also considered. It was also evident to me that English is used extensively as the basic language.

To further analyse these statements I need a more comprehensive research project in which I would delve into language selection and attendant mechanisms. I will scrutinise the results in my final Master's thesis and furnish EZA with them.

Sandra Baum ■

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