



NEWS

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR WORKERS' QUESTIONS • NO. 2 / 2017

EDITORIAL



Dear Readers, Dear Friends of EZA,

With this new issue of EZA News, EZA takes its leave for a well-deserved summer break. I would like to highlight two aspects of this issue – a first, of which EZA can be quietly proud: for the first

time in the existence of EZA, an EZA President spoke before the ILO! In the plenary session of this year's International Labour Conference, Bartho Pronk pleaded for strong social dialogue worldwide. This message is also underlined by David Pascal Dion in the interview. Social dialogue, he says, is an excellent example of what is known as "game theory": the interplay of the social partners is for the good of all and, provided the focus is not just on short-term profit, enables the maximum benefit for all concerned. With its education and training programme, EZA is helping workers' organisations in 29 European countries to enter the playing field well equipped...

The entire EZA team wishes you all a good read and a nice, relaxing holiday period!

*Sigrid Schraml
Secretary-General*

Interview with David Pascal Dion, head of the "Social Dialogue" unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Question: *Mr Dion, you are head of the "Social Dialogue" unit of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion. Juncker's Commission has tasked itself with promoting social dialogue in the European Union. At the same time two European Commissioners, Valdis Dombrovskis and Marianne Thyssen, are working on this issue, and various initiatives, in particular a "New start for social dialogue", have been launched to promote social dialogue. What is the concrete impact of these initiatives that you have noticed so far? What effects are still to be expected?*

It is more than two years since President Juncker relaunched social dialogue in the wake of the crisis, as he had promised during his speech before the European Parliament in July 2014. Together with the social partners and the member states, the Commission continues to work in the many areas identified at the begin-

ning of our term of office. These are:

- Involving the social partners more in the European semester,
- Putting greater stress on strengthening the capacities of the national social partners,
- Boosting the involvement of the social partners in drawing up European policy and legislation,
- Clarifying the relationship between agreements concluded between social partners and the "Better regulation" programme.

On the basis of a memo and a pamphlet produced by the Commission, the Tripartite Social Summit of March 2016 reported on progress made in implementing the commitments undertaken as part of the "New start for social dialogue" since March 2015.

On 16 June 2017, the EPSCO Council of the Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs, under the Dutch presidency, adopted the Council's Conclusions on a "New start for social dialogue". And on 27 June 2016, a joint declaration on the "New start for social dialogue" was co-signed, for the first time, by the European social partners, the Commission and the Dutch presidency of the Council of the European Union on behalf of the Council. The declaration identifies the measures the signatories intend to take in their spheres of responsibility in relation to the four priorities.

I would also like to mention a few recent activities:

- In October 2016, the Council's Employment Committee undertook for the first time a thematic review of the involvement of the national social partners in the European semester. This thematic review will be followed

in autumn 2017 by a new review in a more targeted format.

- The social partners were closely involved in the consultation on the European Pillar of Social Rights and were invited to play an important role in implementing it.
- Along with the European Pillar of Social Rights, on 26 April at the end of two phases of consulting the social partners, the Commission adopted a draft directive on the balance between family life and work. At the same time the Commission launched the first phase of two consultations with the social partners on a possible revision of the directive relating to the written declaration and on the possibility of an action aimed at taking up the challenges of access to social security for every worker, regardless of the type of employment.

Question: *You were involved in drawing up the recently published document “Capacity Building for Social Dialogue”. Why is strengthening the social partners’ capacities such a key issue for the Commission? In what way does your unit plan to contribute to strengthening the social partners in the future?*

Capacity building is one of the main strands of the “New start for social dialogue”. Without strengthening the capacities of social dialogue, efforts geared to the greater involvement of the social partners in reforms and policies on national and European level will be ineffective. What is more, without effective social dialogue on a national level, European social dialogue remains baseless.

The Commission and my unit in particular contribute to capacity building by projects run by the ILO training centre in Turin and by funding projects managed by the social partners themselves. The member states can also decide to earmark a part of the structural funds available, especially from the European Social Fund, to the capacity building of the social partners’ organisations.

However, before talking about money, I must put particular emphasis on the responsibility of the social partners’ organisations. As stated in the “Capacity Building for Social Dialogue” chapter of the Commission’s publication “Employ-

David Pascal DION

David Pascal Dion has been head of the social dialogue and industrial relations unit of the Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL) of the European Commission since 1 January 2015.

Before that, he was for more than three years the head of the unit in charge of general coordination, strategic planning and inter-institutional relations in the same DG.

Between mid-2008 and 2011, he had been the policy assistant of three successive Directors General of DG EMPL.

Dion joined DG EMPL in mid-2007 to work on the Lisbon Strategy and the flexicurity file (notably via the flexicurity mission led by Commissioner Vladimir Spidla and president of the French Senate Gérard Larcher).

David Pascal Dion started his career in the Commission in 2004 in the Directorate General for Education and Culture where he wrote Communications and Staff Working Documents on the economics of education.

Before joining the Commission, he did several internships in research institutions and international organisations (incl. OECD, ECB, WTO, UN, IMF, etc.).

He has a master and a PhD in economics prepared at the universities of Paris Dauphine (France) and Mannheim (Germany) as well as a master in law and political science from the University of Paris Descartes and he has written several academic publications including a book on the European economic integration.

He is a French national.



ment and Social Developments in Europe 2016” (ESDE), it is up to the social partners to seize the capacity-building opportunities, for instance by increasing the number of members among young people and women, by professionalising the work of the organisations, or by strengthening the analytical skills of their staff. The primary role of the European and national public authorities is to create an environment conducive to these initia-

tives of the social partners themselves and to the functioning of social dialogue in general.

Question: *Our partners in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans deplore the obstacles to social dialogue in their countries. There, they are helping to put measures for protecting social dialogue into place and often have the feeling that they are not on an equal footing as social part-*

ners. In those countries the governments seem to attach less value to social dialogue. What is the Commission's position on the matter? How can it help improve the situation?

It is true that social dialogue in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans is often less developed than in some countries of the European Union. In fact the labour markets in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans still feature certain weaknesses, notably a low employment rate among women and a high youth unemployment rate. In this context, social dialogue on a national level in these countries is often polarised on labour market reforms and on labour legislation.

To respond to these challenges, in March 2016 the European Commission in conjunction with the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) launched the Western Balkans platform on employment and social affairs. This is a project funded by the European Commission aiming to strengthen regional co-operation and the institutional capacities of governments, employers' and workers' organisations, as well as tripartite institutions. The objective is to facilitate the joint adoption of labour market reforms and social policies, with a view to advancing the processes of pre-accession to the EU. The platform promotes the exchange of good practices in order to improve the functioning of the institutions, in particular the national tripartite economic and social councils. There are structured dialogues on employment and social affairs between the governments of the Western Balkans and the social partners.

In terms of supporting workers' organisations in the candidate and pre-candidate countries in particular, the Commission offers subsidies, via annual calls for proposals, aimed at informing and training organisations that represent workers. These countries can also participate in European social dialogue projects and sectoral committee projects.

Question: Seven of our affiliated organisations chose the subject of the European Pillar of Social Rights as a central focus for their education and training project in 2017-2018. These projects will be bolstered by a scientific opinion from the HIVA Research Institute for Work and Society. In addition, several of our mem-

ber organisations took part in last year's public consultation. However, if the European institutions decided between now and the end of the year that the future of the EU had to fall within scenario no. 2 (nothing except the single market) or no. 4 (do less but efficiently), our affiliated organisations would face another disappointment with the European project. How will the European Commission try to remedy such a disappointment?

A major political question on the European level is the European Pillar of Social Rights which, after a vast public consultation lasting ten months, was published on 26 April 2017. Besides the pillar, a discussion paper on the social dimension of Europe is part of the wider debate about the White Paper on the future of Europe presented by the European Commission on 1 March.

The European Pillar of Social Rights is a major initiative of this Commission. It operates as a political compass outlining 20 essential principles and rights, intended as a contribution to the proper functioning and fairness of the labour markets and social security systems.

The European Commission is counting on your support to work together to implement the European Pillar of Social Rights in keeping with national powers and the principle of subsidiarity, building on the experiences and good practices of each. Hence we appreciate your contributions and encourage you to continue the work to make a lasting success of social Europe.

The "Social Summit for Fair Jobs and Growth" being held in Gothenburg on 17 November 2017 will be a decisive landmark in the progress of the work, in line with the wider debates on the social dimension of Europe.

The three options presented in the discussion paper on the social dimension of Europe do not at all pre-empt the result of the debate on the future of Europe. These options should be regarded as a source of inspiration in the debate and must not limit the deliberation process in any way. In their reactions, citizens and stakeholders can likewise mix these options or propose new options.

Question: It is evident that the recent digitisation of the world of work is bringing about profound changes both for the workers affected and for the whole of European society. In this context, what in your opinion are the most pressing challenges and how are you responding to them in your scope of competence?

Digitisation is not a new phenomenon. Although digitisation has been transforming European societies and economies for several years now, it has accelerated recently and is currently affecting the majority of economic sectors.

Digitisation has the potential to increase demand for some jobs and conversely result in the disappearance of others. Some tasks are currently being automated, and this will have a huge impact not only on our working conditions but also on our living conditions: take the case of driverless vehicles, for instance.

Digitisation also brings with it new kinds of employment, the most notable example being online platforms that call into question present-day conditions in the sphere of social rights, employment and social security. Self-employment and freelance work are likewise on the increase, calling social security systems into question. In the future, workers will experience career changes and switches more frequently than now.

Moreover, there is increasing demand in today's labour markets for highly qualified workers, whereas demand for less qualified workers is stagnating or decreasing. There is also a risk of exclusion of older generations who do not necessarily have the skills required by the current labour market, especially in terms of digital skills. There is concern about the quality of jobs in the future, particularly with regard to the increase in work-related stress and the difficulty of "switching off".

Policy-makers and the social partners must act to confront these transformations. The initiatives taken by the Commission in the digital single market are in this direction.

The education and training systems need to be reorganised in order to respond to the new qualifications and skills required in the labour market. This calls for part-

nerships between the various stakeholders (industry and educational institutions, for instance).

The social partners have a key role to play in ensuring that the education and training programmes meet the labour market demand and that there is sufficient and suitable on-the-job training.

Chapter 4 of “Employment and Social Development in Europe 2016” deals with the impact on the labour market of the development of information and communication technology (ITC) and of digitisation. It concludes that the speed, scope and impact of technological innovations may cause a major transformation in current social and economic systems. I would add that this also encompasses social dialogue and the way in which collective bargaining has been conducted so far. The conception and implementation of effective strategies for confronting the impact of digitisation on labour markets and social security systems will define the future of the EU.

Question: What aims have you set yourself? What do you want to accomplish in the course of your duties?

For me, promoting social dialogue means ensuring or helping to create an institutional framework conducive to the emergence or bolstering of strong and independent social partner organisations, negotiations between social partners aimed at joint results and especially agreements, and the close incorporation of these organisations by public authorities in political decision-making on matters in which the organisations have direct responsibility.

The two things I particularly like about my work are firstly, the fact that we are constantly in negotiations seeking solutions to pressing problems and issues. Secondly, we are in contact with individuals who have their finger on the pulse of the world of work and our societies, and therefore we deal with real issues our fellow citizens face head on: working conditions, training courses, job creation and job losses etc. It's incredibly refreshing and gratifying.

Theoretically speaking, to my mind social dialogue is an excellent example of “game theory”. It proves that co-operative behaviours enable better results to be achieved

than a non-co-operative or unilateral approach. Unfortunately there are very few research studies into this question, and so I invite researchers to address this issue so as to define the requisite conditions for a social dialogue that is efficient and of quality.

During my presentations on the state of affairs and future developments in social dialogue, I have a habit of using cinema posters that bear witness in very visual and educational terms to the relevance and potential impact of this dialogue.

For example, to express the strength of the social partner agreements I use the film “Trading Places”, in which the two main protagonists swap places and combine their forces to do away with an unfair and ineffective system. To express the tensions between the social partners and the public authorities, I use “The Good, the Bad and the Ugly”, and conversely to express the possibility of true harmony I use “Some Like It Hot”.

I hope that with the “New start for social dialogue”, which I had the opportunity to lead 30 years after the launch of the social dialogue, we will be able to say in 30 years' time that a new relaunch is not necessary, as social dialogue is more solidly established than ever.

EZA President Bartho Pronk's speech at the ILO



EZA-Präsident Bartho Pronk spricht vor den Delegierten der Internationalen Arbeitskonferenz in Genf, 13. Juni 2017

What is needed in Europe and all over the world is strong social dialogue to enable green jobs to become a key element for the future of work, as we would have it. That was what the President of the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA), **Bartho Pronk**, said in the plenary at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) International Labour Conference (ILC) this year, held in Geneva in June 2017. He was commenting on the ILO General Director's report "Work in a changing climate: The Green Initiative". Bartho Pronk is the first EZA President to have spoken before the ILC, during which the roughly 4,000 delegates reach international agreements, monitor their implementation, and discuss international issues relating to the world of work. Since 2016 the EZA has enjoyed observer status in the ILC, followed the debates, exchanged ideas and opinions with its EZA partners in the ILC, and held talks with ILO leaders. Dealing with and steering labour migration was one of the major issues this year. The focus was on how to better manage labour migration in national, neighbouring, regional and supra-regional contexts, and to recruit workers in a fair way. In the discussions and also in the talks held by the EZA it became clear time and again that refugees needed not only protection from armed conflicts, but also medium and long-term prospects in life for themselves and their families. Employment is a key factor in this. However, positive effects can only be achieved if there are the right general

political conditions and access to labour markets. Besides the migration flows from African countries widely reported in the media, the ILO estimates that in the future there will also be increased migration to Europe from Central Asia. Adopting the title "Employment and Decent Work for Peace and Resilience", the ILC accepted a recommendation updating a document from 1944 and keeping more robustly abreast of current and future circumstances. In a further discussion, progress made in the fundamental rights and principles of labour was subjected to critical analysis. Time and again the ILO scrutinises the development in compliance with the core labour standards in the four fundamental areas of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, the elimination of forced labour, the abolition of child labour, and the prohibition of discrimination in employment and at the workplace. In addition to observing the ongoing debates, Bartho Pronk and Norbert Klein also had talks with leading figures in the ILO. Besides the Vice-Chairperson of the ILO Governing Body Luc Cortebeek, who has since been elected President, they included the Regional Director of the ILO for Europe and Central Asia, Heinz Koller, and the Deputy Director of the Department for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), Anna Biondi. They are all preparing the ILO anniversary in 2019. In that year the United Nations Labour Organisation will be 100 years old. Looking back over the ILO's work in the last century, the idea is to ini-

tiate a debate on the "future of labour", to which the EZA would also like to contribute.

Once again an exchange was organised between the EZA member centres that had delegates at the ILC. The 16 conference-goers who gathered for a lunch at the ILO building were evidently delighted to have this opportunity to exchange thoughts and experiences; it was also attended by Anna Biondi and the socio-religious adviser to the General Director of the ILO, Pierre Martinot-Lagarde.

You can catch up with Bartho Pronk's speech on the ILO website at http://www.ilo.org/ilc/ILCSessions/106/plenary/live-broadcast/WCMS_555750/langen/index.htm, "Height Meeting of the Plenary", 13 June 2017, timeline 4:05:45 to 4:11:03. **Norbert Klein** ■

IMPRINT

Published by

EZA
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

Sigrid Schraml (editor-in-chief),
Matthias Homey, Norbert Klein,
Victoria Znined, Esmeralda Van den Bosch

Design and composition

HellaDesign, Emmendingen
E-mail: helladesign@web.de

Photos

EZA, European Commission

Frequency of publication

Four issues a year



This publication receives financial support from the European Union.