

EDITORIAL



Dear Readers, Dear Friends of EZA,

At this year's EZA kick-off seminar in Copenhagen our Danish member Krifa presented its Job Satisfaction Index. In conjunction with The Happiness Research Institute, this is now the

third year Krifa has been researching the factors that influence the Danes' job satisfaction. The most important factor for Danish employees is the usefulness of their work. For Krifa, job satisfaction, or happiness at work, is more than just an index; it is a mission, a vision. There were in-depth discussions in Copenhagen: given high unemployment figures, wage dumping and inadequate labour law provisions in many countries, is the question of happiness at work not a champagne problem? I don't think so! In my view it has a lot to do with our struggle for decent work. It is a question of spirituality and work, the spirituality of work. As human beings we are active at work not only with the small matter of our professional skills. We contribute

our entire self, completely and utterly. We shape our working environment with our self, the working environment shapes us as a person. Every human being is spiritual, irrespective of whether he/she regards himself/herself as religious. We endeavour to give meaning to our life...in the search for an abundance of happiness in life...

The entire EZA team wishes you all a blessed Christmas, and a happy, fulfilled life in 2018!

*Sigrid Schraml
Secretary-General*

The European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) Kick-off Seminar in Copenhagen

The transformation of workers' organisations in a changing socio-political environment in Europe was the focal issue of the EZA kick-off seminar held in Copenhagen, Denmark from 30 November to 1 December 2017. It was organised in conjunction with Krifa (Kristelig Fagbevægelse) with funding from the European Union.

Some 100 representatives of Christian-social workers' organisations from 26 European countries gathered to exchange ideas on this question and on the core issues of the EZA education programme 2018.

Philippe Pochet, General Director of ETUI, emphasised in his welcoming address how important good co-operation between EZA and ETUI was. He called for a clear social trade union strategy, to restore a balance between social and economic interests. With regard to current European Commission policy (e.g. the Pillar of Social Rights), he appealed to the participants to take advantage of the window of opportunity currently open in

order to promote the social dimension of Europe.

Social dialogue in Europe

Jörg Tagger, acting head of the "Social Dialogue" unit in the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, gave an overview of the historical development and structures of social dialogue on the European level, its current status, and prospects for the coming years. Tagger underlined the present Commission's commitment to the social dimension of the EU. For the first time, social dialogue found its way into a Council resolution paper with the "New Start for Social Dialogue". Active co-operation between the social partners was important, he said, to enable social dialogue to be effective.

In the discussion the workers' representatives made it plain that precisely co-operation between the social partners was being hindered time and again in practice by the European Commission, and bak-

ked this up with concrete examples, such as the continuing lack of an agreement in the hairdressing sector. The European Commission had to insist more strongly that existing labour laws were applied – for instance during accession negotiations with Western Balkan states. Some of the participants felt positive about the recently concluded agreements on the European Pillar of Social Rights, others were sceptical, as it was little more than a non-binding pillar with symbolic value. It was now imperative for life to be breathed into the pillar.

Transformation of workers' organisations against the background of atypical work – job satisfaction – cyber trade unions

The role which atypical work, job satisfaction and cyber trade unions play in the ongoing changes in the world of work, was examined in three keynote speeches followed by a discussion.



On the panel (from left to right): Sigrid Schraml, EZA Secretary-General, Bartho Pronk, EZA President, Søren Fibiger Olesen, President of the host, Krifa

Maria Mihaela Darle (Cartel Alfa) pointed out that a consequence of *atypical work*, often done without an employment contract, was that for the workers' organisations involved there was in many cases no precisely defined "opposite party", and so it was not clear how social dialogue could be set in motion in such cases. It was therefore important to make atypical work visible.

Søren Filbert (Krifa) identified the development of *job satisfaction* as a new task for workers' organisations. In view of increasingly frequent stress and burnout in working life, not only had such health risks to be countered with emergency care, but precautionary measures had to be taken to promote job satisfaction throughout working life, to ensure that permanently good working conditions were created.

Cyber trade unions, according to Professor Viorel Rotilă (FSSR), could be an answer to the digital challenges that affect not only the world of work but also the functioning of workers' organisations. They offered additional instruments enabling the trade unions to be active in the virtual world as well.

In the discussion it became evident that although workers' organisations had to adapt to the digital revolution, it must not be forgotten that human contact still plays a crucial role. In the EZA network with its Christian and human values, precisely this foundation should not be lost. It also became clear that the virtual orientation of trade unions would appeal more to younger people, but also opened up the opportunity to approach new target groups. It was also emphasised that it was

not a case of "either-or", but one of "as well as".

The issue of job satisfaction was later re-addressed by Kurt Bech, Head of Corporate Services at Krifa. He presented the Danish Job Satisfaction Index GAIS, in which employees rate their own company. Two key questions defined Bech's statements: Are job satisfaction and collective agreements mutually exclusive? Is dialogue the opposite of strike? Bech identified as core tasks of trade unions the creation of good jobs, better living conditions, and more job satisfaction. However, he also saw that in many regions of Europe the struggle for minimum wages and a minimum of social standards still had priority today.

500 years of Luther

In his socio-ethical address to mark the Luther anniversary year, Professor Asger Christian Højlund of the Lutheran University of Theology Aarhus, Denmark described trade unions as a key part of the network that God needed to prevent his creation disintegrating. In trade union work, fighting not only for their own rights but also for the rights and life of others, as well as in their endeavours to create and improve good living conditions, he saw an expression of God's loving care to protect the poor from exploitation.

EZA education programme 2018

An important feature of the EZA education programme 2018, according to Matthias Homey, an academic member of the EZA staff, is the further intensification of links between the topics of the

education activities. A cornerstone of this will be the series of seminars on the strategies of European institutions, in which the projects on the focal topic of "capacity building" will have academic back-up. In 2018 there will also be co-ordinated projects on "new labour relations: digitalisation and trade union strategies", "quality of work", "European Pillar of Social Rights" and "working and living in a digitised world".



Luc Cortebeek, Chairperson of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation, guest speaker at this year's EZA General Assembly in Copenhagen/Denmark, spoke about the challenges and prospects for the work of the International Labour Organisation

Agora – EZA networking exchange

The aim of this year's Agora was to provide members with a better overview of which organisation was working on which topic, and to bring possible partners together.

In his closing remarks, EZA President Bartho Pronk thanked everyone involved in the kick-off seminar for their commitment. Once again, he highlighted in particular the digital challenges in the world of work, and described the gig economy as a dead end. Victoria Znined ■

The Social Pillar is here!

From the first day of the Juncker Commission's appointment, the Commission President himself has been very vocal on a more social Europe, a social AAA rating for the EU and a new start for social dialogue. Three years into its mandate, one can say that social policies have returned to the EU agenda. It is now up to the European institutions, the member states, social partners and civil society to make sure that the pillar agreed on paper also becomes a reality for Europe's citizens.

In a formal ceremony, the Presidents of the European Commission and Parliament, Jean-Claude Juncker and Antonio Tajani, together with Estonian Prime Minister Juri Ratas on behalf of the EU Council, signed the 'European Pillar of Social Rights'. One can question whether the signing of a non-binding set of principles deserves such a show. But in times of rising populism, nationalism and growing support for Eurosceptic parties, the quest for a more social Europe might reach national newspapers and thus the

for some countries and outlines an orientation towards a European social policy contrary to the preference of some members in the Council, which do not want to transfer sovereignty for social policies to the European level.

Together with the proposal for the inter-institutional proclamation, the Commission proposed a first set of legal measures to implement the pillar. If the social partners fail to agree on a revision of the Written Statement Directive (one of the proposed legal measures), the Commission will table a proposal on 20 December 2017. The proposal will aim to address changes in the labour market induced by digitalisation.

At the end of November, the Commission presented the Autumn Package of the European Semester, setting out the EU's economic and social priorities for the year ahead. This year's announcement was a first implementation test for the pillar. The Joint Employment Report, which is part of the Autumn Package, uses the Social Scoreboard introduced by the pillar to assess the social and employment performance of the member states based upon a range of indicators reflecting the three chapters of the pillar: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, dynamic labour markets and fair working conditions, public support/social protection and inclusion.

Esmeralda Van den Bosch ■



After two years of consultations and negotiations, on 17 November 2017, the leaders of the three European institutions signed the interinstitutional proclamation to install a European Pillar of Social Rights in Gothenburg, Sweden

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Why a little show does not hurt

At the Social Summit in Gothenburg, which was the first one of its kind in 20 years, representatives of trade unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations debated with the member states' heads of state and government as well as European Commissioners in three working sessions how to promote fair jobs and growth in the future. As far as the organisation of the event is concerned, the Swedish government has to be given credit for having made European policy debates more accessible to a wider audience. Not only were the working sessions livestreamed on Facebook, but young students from the University of Gothenburg were also able to participate and ask questions to European policymakers and stakeholders.

broader public: a repercussion which should not be underestimated.

Implementation

After the Summit, Marianne Thyssen, Commissioner in charge of employment and social affairs, stated that the Commission will integrate the pillar in the European Semester. *„We will also use our funds and we will fight in the next multi-annual financial framework [seven-year EU budget] to have enough money available to support Member States for the reforms that are necessary,”* she said.

For many actors who had wished for a binding set of social rights, the Social Summit in Gothenburg hence 'was just the beginning'. Nevertheless, the pillar does set out standards that are sensitive

6th Conference of the EZA Platform for Young Workers in Cyprus

The 6th conference of the EZA Platform for Young Workers (PYW) on “Precarious youth employment – challenges and solutions through greater integration of young workers in social dialogue” was held in Platres, Cyprus, from 28 to 30 September 2017 in conjunction with KIKEA-DEOK (Cypriot Institute of Training/Education and Employment). Forty participants from 18 European countries discussed the situation of young people in precarious jobs, and job satisfaction.

Katrin Stancheva (PODKREPA, Bulgaria) presented results of a questionnaire, sent out by the platform’s core group to the participants in the months prior to the conference, to gather detailed information on the situation of young people in the labour market. For example, the key problem identified for young people in the EU nowadays was generally low income. 58% of respondents had not yet used public employment services. 39% of respondents had never heard of the Youth Guarantee and its possibilities.

The conference-goers were introduced to the topic of “Young people in precarious work” in an experimental way. They were asked to line up in a row on the nearby football pitch. Core group co-ordinator Neza Repansek asked them questions relating to the transition from school to working life, for instance whether their studies were prolonged to defer entry into the labour market. If the answer was “Yes”, they were to take a step forward. After answering all the questions, the participants were scattered all over the football pitch. Most of them had had to overcome several of the challenges referred to, on the way from school to work.

These experiences of young workers throughout Europe were then confirmed in the panel discussion on the subject, in which representatives from Spain and Bulgaria reported the findings on “Youth and the world of work” from their organisations.

Cristian Baldea (IFES) cited practical examples of how workers’ organisations took on board the concerns of young people, explaining how IFES developed pro-



Young Workers Conference delegates in Cyprus in September 2017

jects to facilitate young workers’ access to the labour market in Romania. Katrin Stancheva reported on good practices of the youth department of her trade union Podkrepa in Bulgaria, e.g. through her trade union’s “Transition to the labour market” initiatives.

The result of another exercise, in which the young people took part in a role play emulating tripartite social dialogue, was that for those in the “workers’ representatives” group the work/private life balance and employers’ compliance with working time regulations were very important. The high pressure of work and the burn-out phenomenon were identified as stress factors.

Another conference issue was “job satisfaction”. In “satisfaction-oriented games” the participants learnt in an unusual way to work together in a team. It became clear that more can be achieved by working together than competing with one another. Benjamin Damsgaard added to the conference-goers’ experiences by presenting the Job Satisfaction Index, which his trade union Krifa (Denmark) had commissioned. He outlined various contributing factors to job satisfaction, such as influence at work, success, and a good relationship with colleagues. An interactive questionnaire enabled the participants to ascertain their own job satisfaction. Almost 70% of the young people felt quite happy at work. 75% of them worked more than 35 hours a week, and 80% did overtime. 75% of those who did overtime were not paid for it. The young conference-goers regarded co-operation with colleagues at work as important, they find fulfilment in their work if they can complete their tasks, receive their pay, and are allowed to use their skills at work.

Even though the situation of young people varies greatly in the different EU states, the participants were glad to be able to exchange ideas and experiences with one another, and felt boosted by the discussions. The next Young Workers Conference will be held in collaboration with Podkrepa in Bulgaria in September 2018. *Esmeralda Van den Bosch* ■

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