

PERC Newsletter, June 2008



John Monks, PERC General Secretary

Inside this issue:

- 1. Message from the PERC General Secretary*
- 2. PERC activities*
- 3. News from affiliates*
- 4. Upcoming events*
- 5. You may be interested*

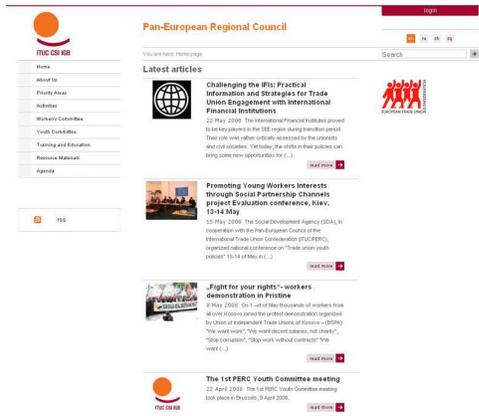
PERC Newsletter Editorial

Welcome to the first edition of our Newsletter. It has taken some time to appear but, taken together with the launch of our website announced below; this marks a big step towards making PERC a reality for our members.

The Pan-European Regional Council has the ambition to bring invigorated approaches to trade union development and organisation and to deal with challenging subjects, such as migration and energy provision, while of course maintaining our staunch defence of human and trade union rights and our pursuit of social dialogue whenever possible.

Our Executive Committee last March agreed a substantial work programme, and our officers in Brussels and the regional offices are now busy putting it into effect. We hope to provide information every month about how the plans are advancing. We also want our activities to be members-driven and I look forward to hearing about initiatives you are taking in building our common trade union house in the wider Europe. I hope that we can learn from each other and so advance together.

I hope that you will find our Newsletter interesting and that you will disseminate it as widely as possible among our activists. We also will welcome suggestions as to how to improve this service and look forward to hearing from you.



PERC web-site was launched and is now online at:

perc.ituc-csi.org

There are four languages: English, Russian, Bosnian-Serbo-Croat and Albanian. By this moment only English version is functioning and materials for other languages are in translation now.

“Promoting Young Workers Interests through Social Partnership Channels” TACIS IBPP project closing conference, 13-14 May, Kiev



PERC activities

More than 200 trainees were involved in education activities in 11 regions of Ukraine – Kiev, Lviv, Zaporoj'e, Odessa, Dnepropetrovsk, Donetsk, Kirovohrad, Nikolaev, Khmel'nitskiy, Lugansk and Chernigov while national thematic discussions – on decent work, on informal economy and role of the unions – as well as 6 regional conferences, with social partners, on the issues of decent work for young people brought together several hundred people. Young union activists who took part in the project also applied themselves as experts on the everyday life of young people in Ukraine and developed a set of recommendations to the authorities on the main directions of the national youth policy with reference to their acquired knowledge on the European Social Model.

Recommendations of the conference to trade union partners:

- Development of trade union strategy in the field of education, that would address all the level of trade union movement;
- Design and implementation of cooperation projects, with unions of the European Union;
- Planning of specific targeted trade union actions and trade union public relations campaigns.

The conference was aimed at assessing trade union and educational potential developed in the framework of the project and to outline its further usage and application by trade union organizations. It involved more than 60 young trade union activists from the project regions, as well as trade union leaders and representatives of the SDA and ITUC/PERC. During plenary sessions and group work the unionists have discussed the impact of the project in the regions, the successes and lessons learnt of the activities, the challenges that Ukrainian society and trade union are facing and the strategic role of trade union education in making workers organizations capable to meet them. In particular, the conference discussed the issues of education system of Ukraine, reforms of health system, the employment and labour market policies, wages, family and household issues, including housing programmes, as well as the urgency for the young workers to voice their concerns with decision making authorities, through and with assistance of their unions.

/PERC

Course for gender policies in Oxford



A delegation of women trade unionists from the NIS countries (Russia, Ukraine and Georgia) has participated in a course for gender policies in Oxford on “*Women, Leadership and Gender Equality*” that took place in March.

The course was organized by Ruskin College and constitutes part of the education and training policy of the ITUC/PERC. It was a week of fruitful discussion, practical skills development and seminars where the women had the opportunity to meet and work with the UK women’s organizations, part of the Webb Institute Leadership Development Program.

It was also a perfect opportunity to call for decent life and decent work for women in the NIS region.

/PERC

The 1st PERC Youth Committee meeting

The 1st PERC Youth Committee meeting took place in Brussels, 9 April 2008. The Committee discussed the programme of action, including the youth representativity mapping exercise to be launched by the PERC, the demographic changes activity with the Council of Europe and the preparation for wide European Youth Conference in 2009. Robert Hansen from LO-Norway was elected as the Chair of the Committee and Evgeniy Sivaykin from the FNPR and Oksana Shevchuk from the KVPU as its Vice-Chairs. The Committee also nominated representatives of the region in the ITUC Youth Committee: Robert Hansen, Lo-Norway, Tanya Matias, LCGB, Mina Vukojicic, Nezavisnost and Vasil Andreev, FPU.

News from affiliates

Croatia

Ana Knezevic, UATUC President, PERC Vice-President:

«Croatia has to make progress, and it can be done only together. We do not agree to being a fig leaf on the partnership trefoil. We are an equal partner, and all of us gathered here sending you a message are a proof of that. We want Croatia in which it is an honour to be a citizen, a pleasure to be a worker, desirable to be an entrepreneur and we want a state of well-being, because Croatia is capable of that and because we deserve it»

More than 55 000 demonstrators gathered at the central square in Zagreb Trg bana Josipa Jelačića, who came from all over Croatia, from among trade union ranks and supported by the citizens of Zagreb, to send an expressed message to the Croatian Government and Parliament, as well as to employers, that it is no longer possible to live with such wages!

The demonstrators sent a message to the authorities and employers that they do not want a country of the arrogant rich and the degraded poor. They demanded the improvement of living standard of all people, protection of fundamental workers’ rights, greater social security, lower scholarship fees etc. Not even a bad weather and heavy rain prevented a number of demonstrators to show their dissatisfaction, and a packed central square was an impressive site – a river of red caps, flags and banners.

After long-standing and hard negotiations, at the meeting held on 7 May 2008 social partners finally managed to agree on the Minimum Wage Act - the minimum wage will be 39 percent of the average wage as of 1 July. Although this Agreement has not completely met all the demands and proposals of the trade union side, it is nevertheless a huge



step forward and one of the first big and important outcomes over the pressures put by the Croatian trade union confederations at the recent demonstrations held on 12 April 2008 in Zagreb.

/UATUC

Ukraine:

April 28, 2008 at 2pm, the Youth Council of the FTU conducted a March in Memory of workers who have been injured on the job



Ukraine is an extremely dangerous country when it comes to worker health and safety. More than 20,000 Ukrainian workers were the victims of work-related traumas and professional illnesses in 2007, according to official statistics. Based on information held by trade unions, that number is 100 times greater, and as high as 2 million people.

Ukraine is the most dangerous country in which to be a miner. In comparison with the United States, in Ukraine 200 more miners die mining the equivalent amount of coal. Even China – the global leader in terms of absolute numbers of mining deaths has managed to decrease incidents at its mining enterprises, unlike Ukraine. It is cheaper for employers to buy official permission to ignore health and safety measures, than to invest money in modernizing and increasing the safety levels of the mines. Trade unions can no longer remain silent.

/FPU

BSPK: „Fight for your rights“- demonstration in Pristine



On 1 –st of May thousands of workers from all over Kosovo joined the protest demonstration organized by Union of Independent Trade Unions of Kosovo – (BSPK) *“We want work”, “We want decent salaries, not charity”, “Stop corruption”, “Stop work without contracts” “We want Social Fund”* – these were the main slogans of the action. The demonstrators urged BSPK to make more pressure to the Government and Parliament of the Republic of Kosovo, that worker’s voice must be heard.

BSPK is aware of the fact that Kosovo is in its first days of establishing as a newest country in the world, but 100 days period for the new government was too long, since they didn’t find time during this period to meet with legitimate worker’s representatives of BSPK, and they were not ready to hear workers demands till now.

Solidarity messages were sent from ITUC, PERC, and other trade union confederations from Montenegro, Slovenia, Croatia, Lithuania, Albania and Italy.

/BSPK

Serbia

Twelve days before the recent Serbian elections, the Federation of Autonomous Unions of Serbia (SSSS) and the Branch Union Confederation 'Independence' (UGS

The first fruits of the Serbian social dialogue: conclusion of a new general collective agreement with the Union of Employers

“This is a truly historic event”, stressed Branislav Canak, the President of Nezavisnost

Nezavisnost) concluded a general collective agreement with the Union of Employers following two and a half years of intense negotiations.

This new collective agreement, which was signed in the presence of the President of the Republic of Serbia, Boris Tadic, and the Minister for Labour and Social Policy, Rasim Ljajic, is valid for five years and followed a collective bargaining vacuum that had lasted three years, with very negative consequences for Serbian workers.

“This is a truly historic event”, stressed Branislav Canak, the President of Nezavisnost and a deputy Worker Member of the ILO Governing Body, as this is the first time that a real social dialogue has taken place in Serbia since the beginning of the 1990s.

Both of the union leaders, Ljubisav Orbović, the President of SSSS, and Branislav Canak, the President of Nezavisnost, stressed the fact that it was thanks to the change of leadership of the Union of Employers that the organisation changed its approach. In the words of the employers’ new Chairman, Stevan Avramović: “everything can be solved through dialogue. That is why the Union of Employers unanimously adopted the decision to sign the agreement”.

/SSSS and Nezavisnost

***Seminar on “The Social Acquis Communautaire and the European Social Charter”
21 to 23 May 2008, Banja Luka***

The PERC with the help of the three Belgian trade unions FGTB, CSC and CGSL organized a seminar on “The Social Acquis Communautaire and the European Social Charter” from 21 to 23 May 2008 in Banja Luka. Some thirty participants from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia and Montenegro took part in the seminar. The objectives of the seminar included understanding of the European Social legislation, the concept of Social Europe, the European Social Charter, fundamental economic, social and cultural rights, industrial relations, the right to strike and the social dialogue in the EU enlargement process. The main items were presented by trade unions experts from FGTB, NFWC, PERC and the PERC Sarajevo office. As a result of the seminar a group of trade union experts for mutual cooperation and support has been set up and the group proposed permanent cooperation on this subject through the SEE Trade Union Forum.

ITUC/PERC Regional office Sarajevo

Upcoming events:

Organising

CEE organizing network meeting, 29-30 May, Brussels

Informal Economy

SEE-NIS thematic workshop, 24-25 June, Brussels

Youth

PERC Youth Camp, 26 June – 3 July, Palanga

Gender

Women's Committee Transitional Body meeting, 26 June, Brussels

Kaliningrad region

Workshop on impact of Special Economic Zones on workers rights, 7-8 June, Kaliningrad

You may be interested

*EU Neighborhood Forum
Moldova and Transnistria, coming
to a solution?, 15 May, Brussels*

Under the auspices of the EU Neighborhood Forum, PERC was invited to participate in a meeting on “**Moldova and Transnistria, coming to a solution?**” on Thursday 15 May in Brussels. The meeting was the first in a series of three dealing with protracted conflicts in the EU's neighborhood. Kalman Mizsei, EU Special Representative to Moldova mentioned that for the EU the full sovereignty of Moldova, special status of autonomy of Transnistria and the rapid democratization of the region were the most important points of general consensus. Concerning the issue of democratization of the region the PERC insisted on a more “evident” involvement of the civil society in the debates.

*2nd Western Balkans Civil Society
Forum, 4 and 5 June, Ljubljana*

The **2nd Western Balkans Civil Society Forum** will be organised by the EESC in Ljubljana on 4 and 5 June 2008. This event is supported by the Slovenian Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This 2nd Forum, prepared in compliance with the conclusions of the 1st Forum held in March 2006, will provide a new opportunity for EESC members, representatives of civil society organisations from the region and from the EU, and the various European institutions and international organisations to exchange views on the situation, needs and future of civil society in specific areas.



*'Greening the Black Sea Synergy'
10 June, Brussels*

The event is organized by the Heinrich Böll Foundation and will present the results of a study, which aims to contribute to the formation of a sustainable Black Sea Synergy by providing concrete policy recommendations in the fields of energy, transport, and security, taking into account environmental factors.

The Synergy covers six riparian countries as well as Armenia, Azerbaijan and the Republic of Moldova.

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