

PERC Newsletter, April 2009

Editor in chief:
John Monks,
PERC Secretary General
PERC team

Inside this issue:

1. PERC activities

2. News from affiliates

3. Upcoming events

4. You may be interested

SEE Trade Union Forum Zagreb on 7–8 April 2009.



Confronting the impact of the crisis on the South East Europe (SEE) region was at the heart of the debates at the meeting of the SEE Trade Union Forum in Zagreb on 7–8 April 2009. The European future of the region was also a major focus of interest to the organizations present. Other topics on the agenda of the SEE Forum meeting involved the preparations for a future transport community treaty for SEE, and the relations of the Forum with the Regional Cooperation Council in Sarajevo

The European Union being the main trading partner and source of capital investment in the SEE region, developments in the EU deeply impact on the effects of the crisis in SEE, as well as on the pattern and speed of recovery in the region. The SEE Trade Union Forum meeting, therefore, provided a good opportunity for discussing the challenges of the crisis for the SEE region from western as well as eastern European perspectives.

Participating at the meeting were the President of the Pan European Regional Council (PERC) – Michail Shmakov, who is also President of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions in Russia – and the General Secretary of PERC – John Monks, who is also General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). Most trade unions that are members of the SEE Trade Union Forum are members of PERC.

John Monks underlined the deep concerns of the trade union confederation in relation to the crisis-hit EU economies and the crisis' impact on the EU, particularly in terms of unemployment, job precariousness, raising inequalities and social unrest across the countries affected.

In that respect, the recent G20 summit in London has given encouraging signs for progress on jobs, financial regulation and new content to globalisation. Mr Shmakov outlined the particular steps taken by the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD (TUAC) to promote the interests of working people and trade unions in the final outcome of the meeting.



On the European future of the SEE countries, PERC General Secretary John Monks reaffirmed the confederation's position in supporting EU enlargement towards central and eastern European countries.

Meeting the Deputy Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship, Mr Monks stressed the importance of compliance with the *social acquis* of the EU and the involvement of the trade unions in the process for the final success of Croatian accession to the EU. He also met with the leaders of Croatian trade unions.

/PERC/

PERC Workshop on “The international and European Trade Union Policy Architecture; patterns of work and cooperation” Brussels, 21-22 April



The aim of the workshop organized by PERC in Brussels was to bring together the colleagues responsible for relations with PERC to discuss the annual program of the PERC, the guidelines for its implementation and also issues of better communication with member organisations in the process of implementation of the activities. Around thirty participants from all parts of Europe took part in the workshop. Presentations have been made by the ITUC and ETUC officials on current structure of international and European trade union movement; the PERC and the ITUC staff presented the work program, guidelines, communication, financial aspects and projects. Jaap Wienen, Deputy Secretary General presented the ITUC cooperation and development program; Tim Noonan, director of Campaigns and Communication department of the ITUC presented the actions to be undertaken for the WDDW on 7 October this year and Jim Baker made an appeal to all PERC affiliated to support the campaign for the Employee Free Choice Act in the USA.

The ITUC frame for work on trade union rights and survey of violations, the enlargement process, Eastern Partnership, assistance channels were other issues discussed during the workshop. The activity was well appreciated both by participants and invited guests and brought new ideas for future cooperation and improved efficiency of the PERC.

/PERC/

Conference on “Trade Union Membership and minorities”, Paris, 23-25 April



Avec le soutien de la MAAIONG - MAEE France, de la CES / ETUC, du PERC / CSH-ITUC.

With the Final Conference, held in Paris, France on 23-25 April, the CGT France and TU Confederations from South- East European Countries (Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo) finalized implementation of the Project “**Trade Union Membership and minorities**”. The Project aim was to train the trade unions to include the struggle against discrimination in their recruitment campaigns and to encourage them to become more active in rebuilding society, overcoming ethnic conflicts and struggling against discrimination. It was also wish to strengthen the links between unions and civil society. The SEE Trade unions worked with the representatives of Roma’s population. In this line, the following activities were run: collecting information and analysing a position of Roma’s population in the society, access and rights in educational system, position on labour market, access to health care and particularly discrimination in employment. In the thematic sessions contributed Mr. Jean-Michel Joubier- Head of Europe International Department CGT, Mr. Bernard Dreano – Helsinki Committee, Mr. Malik Selemkour-Human Rights League, and Mr. Michel Mine- Academic, legal expert of French Unions to the ETUC, Mr. Grigor Gradev- PERC Executive Secretary and Ms. Jacqueline Dernes- Le Courier des Balkans.

/ITUC-PERC SEE Office Sarajevo/

NIS sub regional workshop - “Promoting rights and representing workers engaged in informal labor relations” Tbilissi Georgia, 28-29 of April



Participants from Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan have discussed the PERC/FNV IE project activities since September 2007, exchanged activity experience , presented national action plans and achieved results, agreed on IE workers in NIS’s information network, prepared recommendations for work with Informal workers in the crisis conditions, discussed future action plans.

During first project phase around 6000 informal workers organized into target NIS trade unions, mostly from commerce, transport and textile sectors. More then 1500 trade union members and non members attended educational informational activities related with the project.

Project scientific tutor Prof. Krastyo Petkov in conclusion note: no any sign that IE will be reduced, it is transferred from the periphery to the centre, also IE transfer internationally, there is no national specificity, it spreads through the migrants and MNC’s. Self-employment boom is becoming a major form of employment in the region.

PERC Executive secretary Grigor Gradev summarized the discussion and marked the thesis that developing market mechanisms will eliminate the IE itself is a myth. IE adapts to the formal economy and mixes with it (envelope pay). IE is already shaping society and the economy, market will not solve problems, and trade unions have to

influence legal framework changes, traditional approach does not give sufficient results in the new contexts, there is need to seek new approaches. Crisis provides opportunities to change the society towards the positive.

Representatives of ILO Moscow, AFL-CIO Solidarity centre and ITUC/PERC Moscow office made big input into the workshop discussions. According independent researches 48% from all employees in New Independent States are engaged in Informal Economy.

/ PERC Office Vilnius/

Workshop on “Harmonization of National Labor Legislation in Macedonia with the European standards and Pension System Reforms”, Skopje 28 and 29 April



The workshop was held in cooperation with the FES Office Macedonia and with ETUI, which provided Ms. Wiebke Warneck, legal expert who delivered a presentation on the EU labor law standards and directives dealing with issues of interest to the trade unions in Macedonia.

Active participation by all three trade union associations in Macedonia, the presence of the presidents of UNASM and KSS, and of many young trade unionists in particular added significantly to the value of the workshop.

The participants were interested primarily in the current amendments to the Labor Law; employment agreements, working hours, protection of workers against dismissals, collective bargaining and the manner of defining trade unions' representation.

The main conclusion of the workshop were:

- It is necessary to develop cooperation between the three trade union associations on all important issues regarding the amendments to the labor and social legislation

- To continue to participate in the Regional Network of Legal Experts in order to get prepared for procedures and content of harmonization of the national labor legislation in the EU integration processes;

- To develop a common national network of lawyers from all three trade union associations;

- To work together on developing a social dialogue at the national level, and have one voice in ESC

- To continue to organize seminars, workshops and other forms of training with an equal participation of representatives and experts from all three trade union associations.

/ITUC-PERC SEE Office Sarajevo/

Eastern Partnership-Belarus

On 6-th of May both the ITUC and ETUC have sent a letter to the President of the European Commission, Jose Manuel Barroso, concerning the participation of the president of Belarus in the Eastern Partnership Summit. The letter underlines that the invitation of the Czech Presidency to Lukashenko sends the wrong signals and appeals to the European Commission to invest efforts and



Regional Workshop “Women in the economic crisis and the informalisation of the economy”, Sofia 7-8 May



available resources to seize the importance of the moment and continue with clearly oriented and constructive policy in cooperation with the ILO to further motivate the government of Belarus to genuinely engage in the process of change.
/ITUC/ETUC/

The PERC Women’s Committee with the support of the ILO has organized a regional workshop in Sofia from 7 to 8 May 2009. The theme of the workshop was “Women in the economic crisis and the informalisation of the economy”. Some sixty participants from both Bulgarian unions KNSB and Podkrepa and other countries in the region (Romania, Serbia, Turkey, Poland) took part in the workshop. The event is part of the action plan developed by the PERC Women’s Committee for this year.

Experts from the ILO, ITUC, ETUC, WIEGO, Bulgarian unions and NGOs presented their research on women and the economic crisis, gender inequality in times of economic crisis, women and the informal economy and the consequences of crisis on domestic work. The participants were also informed about the Belgium experience on fighting informal working relations and the system of “service cheques”. The workshop had large media coverage both in Bulgaria and other countries and made a significant contribution to the improvement of trade union strategies on gender dimension of the crisis.

/PERC/

News from affiliates

Hungary

On April 18 thousands of workers, representing all six Hungarian trade union confederations have demonstrated for a socially balanced economic crisis management in front of the Parliament in Budapest

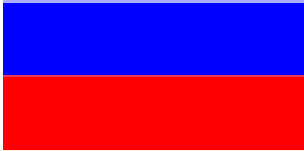
On April 18 thousands of workers, representing all six Hungarian trade union confederations have demonstrated for a socially balanced economic crisis management in front of the Parliament in Budapest. A petition of the six confederations was handed over to the Hungarian government and three parties of the Parliament. The demonstrators - nearly 10.000 - raised their voices for meaningful dialogue, immediate negotiations at the tripartite interest reconciliation council.

Péter Pataky, president of MSZOSZ called for a human management of the crisis, with fair and just distribution of the unavoidable heavy burdens.

The speakers - the presidents of MSZOSZ, the Autonomous confederation and - on behalf of all public service unions - the president of the Professional Confederation stressed that capital, responsible for the financial, economic crisis must take its part; it is unacceptable to put already



Meeting of the trade union leaders in Russia, 28 April, Moscow



Latvia

“Good Occupational Health for All Workers” devoted to World Day for Safety and Health at Work, Riga, 27-28 April

disproportionately high ratio of burdens on employees. Managing the crisis, economic measures should be seen in comprehensive way, together with social consequences. Unions understand the need to make sacrifices, but oppose the disproportionate charge of burdens and that again those living on legal incomes are the main target. Unions are ready to negotiate, but they can not accept illogical decisions, measures which would make the life even more difficult for the workers. The messages of the ETUC and the neighboring ÖGB were read out and all other messages were projected.
/MSZOSZ

A meeting of the leaders of the largest trade union associations of the Russian Federation - the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia, The All-Russian Confederation of Labor and the Labor Confederation of Russia- was held on the 28th of April, 2009 in Moscow.

Having discussed the aggravation of the situation at the labor market in the country at the present time , the leaders of the above-mentioned Trade union centers have come to a mutual agreement to adopt a joint Statement and express their opinion regarding the world financial and economic crisis.

For two days the Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS) was holding an important conference “Good Occupational Health for All Workers” devoted to World Day for Safety and Health at Work. More than 100 trade unionists, employers, H&S workplace representatives, officials from public authorities, ministries, health and safety experts participated in the conference.

According to prognosis of job safety experts, Latvia will face significant worsening of job safety in future – by saving financial means employers will pay less attention to issues concerning job safety and job protection.

The conference participants called responsible public authorities to increase the level of requirements for entrepreneurs concerning application of job safety norms at workplace level, to establish at national level two-stage surveillance system of job protection in enterprises involving social insurance and monitoring institutions.

/LBAS/Latvia

Albania
National conference “Albania in crisis”, Tirana, 30 April

On 30-th April in the National History Museum, KSSH held a national conference with the theme: “Albania in crisis”.

The conference was attended by trade unionists from different industrial branches and local organizations. The President of KSSH, Mr. Kol Nikollaj held a speech in which he stressed the

importance of awareness of public opinion, and measures taken by the government to minimize the effects of economic crisis, which already is present even in Albania. As its result over 30 thousand jobs are lost, the internal and external debt is deeper, the deficits between import and export is also deeper, the incomes of the immigrants have decreased and the credit is getting tight. This is accompanied by an increase of the prices and devaluation of local currency.

The conference welcomed the ILO representative in Tirana Mr. Alfred Topi, who appreciate the work of KSSH and explained the role and impact that the financial economic crisis has on Albanian economy and on the employment
/KSSH/Albania

Upcoming events:

Crisis

9-10 June, Vilnius, Regional Workshop on “Trade union responses to the challenges of the crisis in the Baltics. The role of the IFIs”

Informal economy SEE

15-16 June, Kotor, Informal economy SEE

Informal economy project

23 June, Brussels, Informal economy project advisory group meeting

Organizing

23 June, Brussels, Organizing task-force meeting

Youth

26 June , Palanga Youth Camp

PERC Youth Conference

9-10 July, Brussels



Annual International Labor Conference :

The 98th session of the Annual International Labor Conference (ILC) will be held in Geneva from the 3rd of June till the 19th of June. During the ILC various Committees meet. Of importance for the Human and Trade Union Rights (HTUR) department is the Conference Committee on Application of Standards (CAS), a standing committee of the Conference. The CAS is made up of government, employer, and worker delegates. It examines the Annual report of the Committee of Experts (link to the last Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations :

http://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_103484.pdf) in a tripartite setting and selects from it a number of cases (generally 25 countries) for discussion. The governments referred to in these comments are invited to respond before the Conference Committee and to provide information on the situation in question.

International Financial Institutions

www.ifc.org/projects



Gender Equality conference

Brussels, 15 - 16 June 2009

ITUC Annual Survey of violations of trade union rights

The 2009 edition of the **ITUC Annual Survey** (link to 2008 edition <http://survey08.ituc-csi.org/>) will be launched in June during the ILC. The HTUR department would like to thanks all PERC affiliates that contributed to this survey by responding to the questionnaire.

The 2010 edition is under way. As decided during the HTUR committee, the HTUR department is working on a new format for the Survey. Hence a questionnaire on the Survey is being sent to affiliates in order to gather comments, opinions and ideas on what the new survey could better serve them.

PLEASE do not forget to fill in the report.

Furthermore any information relevant for the Survey can be sent throughout the year to the HTUR department (turights@ituc-csi.org)

ITUC HTUR Dept Action plan: The HTUR department participated in the PERC workshop help in April in Brussels to present the HTUR department action plan (presentation can be asked to Nadine Thevenet, HTUR dept). One of the priorities for the department will be the development of an HTUR network.

Within the HTUR department, **Nadine Thevenet** will be in charge of liaising with PERC on HTUR issues (email: nadine.thevenet@ituc-csi.org / tel (direct): +32 (0)2 224 03 10).

The following proposed loans were posted to the IFC website since the last update:

1. Municipal Company UEZ ZhKKh (subnational finance) - Russia
2. Trakya Cam Sanayii A.S./ Sisecam (glass) - Turkey
3. KuibyshevAzot JSC (chemicals) - Russia
4. JSC ATF Bank – Kazakhstan
5. LLC Savservice Center (warehousing) - Ukraine
6. New World Grain Ukraine/Groupe Soufflet (wheat and barley) - Ukraine

For more information, please search the project number provided here in the IFC projects database (www.ifc.org/projects) or contact Peter Bakvis (pbakvis@globalunions-us.org) in the Global Unions Washington Office.

The European Commission Directorate General for Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities is organizing a Conference entitled "Equality between women and men in a time of change" on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 June 2009 in Brussels.

The Roadmap for equality between women and men, adopted in 2006, is coming to an end next year. This Conference is the opportunity to take stock of the achievements of the Roadmap and to discuss future priorities in the field of gender equality.

