

PERC Newsletter, March 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

PERC Executive Committee meeting, 16 March, Brussels



The 3d meeting of the PERC Executive, attended by more than 90 representatives, discussed the developments in the European region, the political dimension of the EU Eastern Partnership and the effects of the crisis on European economies and the actions that the trade union movement sees vital to undertake in this situation. The meeting also discussed and approved the evolution of the PERC structures – Women and Youth Committees, - the PERC work plan and the report about PERC actions.

PERC is approaching the end of its statutory structural development. The Executive Committee approved the Terms of Reference and the composition of the PERC Women's Committee and it operates as a full fledged PERC structure. A similar process of setting up the PERC Youth Committee is nearing completion in July 2009.

The hammering economic crisis was in the centre of attention of the meeting. The crisis has implications in every country of the region, but also brings challenges of Pan-European nature. Latvia, Ukraine, Belarus, Hungary, Serbia requested IMF assistance. While the IMF loans are necessary to keep the financial stability in the countries, they are also linked with tightening the belt measures, which are not balanced with any investment or social policies considerations.

Meanwhile the risk that bigger economies are only looking for themselves is growing, threatening by the spread of protectionist and nationalistic policies.

John Monks informed the participants about the actions which the ETUC will undertake: campaign for a "New Social Deal" with the EU - a demand backed with consecutive actions in Madrid, Brussels, Berlin and Prague on 14-16 of May, engagement in the respective EU activities by participating in the EU summit on Jobs on 7 May in Prague. The need for coordinated and solidarity actions has been voiced. "Europe is a place of solidarity," – stated John Monks. The G20 summit of 2 April shall listen to the echoes of 1933, which brought protectionist and ultimately nationalistic powers into motions and laid the way to World War II.



ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder informed about the actions ITUC and TUAC are undertaking. He referred, in particular, to the coming G20 summit and the elements of the policies, ITUC is promoting in this regard:

- internationally coordinated actions, with fiscal stimulus not less than 2% of GDPs by all the economies, free riders should not get benefits;
- comprehensive regulation of financial markets, which would also include tax-havens, to provide resources for the real economy;
- new approach to the government of the global economy, including the ILO as integral part; more “green jobs” and “green” budgets

He requested all the organizations to play an active role and to submit on 23 of March the respective demands to the national governments

The participants discussed specifics of the crisis in different countries. In Ukraine the real wages decreased on 12%, wage arrears grew to 1.5 billion of grivnas, 2 million of workers are in administrative leave (unpaid?), with 1,4 unemployed; this figure can grow to 3 million by the end of the year. In Italy the climate for nationalism and xenophobia is increasing. In Turkey employers exercise very offensive measures. In Georgia NGOs supported by the government are organizing actions against unions. In Hungary, unemployment jumped by 2.5%. In Russia, unions have a place in anti-crisis measures design and monitoring. Gender and sectoral implications of crisis have to be carefully considered.

There was a very strong voice for the special role that the ILO, as the only tripartite international body, must play in the processes that frame world actions against crisis and for building new global economic architecture.

John Monks summarized the discussion by underlining the need for immediate measures to fight recession trends, the fact that the present economic and financial system has failed and no return to “business as usual” is possible.

New system has to focus on jobs and livelihood of people. The PERC Executive decided to support the ITUC and TUAC actions with regard G20 meeting, to support the British TUC demonstration on an eve of the G20 summit, to actively contribute to the days of European actions on 14-16 of May and to ensure that all the members sent the ITUC platform to their governments on 23 March. “International Solidarity is vital in the next period. We have to keep going and to find a way out of this”, - Monks concluded.

The Eastern Partnership Policy of the EU (EaP) was also met with interests at the meeting. It is expected to be launched by the Council of the EU at its summit on 7 May in Prague, is covering 6 countries of Europe: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine and (potentially) Belarus. It is aimed to deepen the relations developed earlier in the frame of the European Neighborhood policies. Certain dimensions of the policy linked to labor and social aspects may provide opportunities for the unions to take more active role in the framework of the EaP. . While the main areas involve free trade agreements, energy security, institution building, approximation with the EU legislation, border management, it also mentions the principles of decent work, social dialogue, non-discrimination, etc. The main innovation and a move forward comparing with the ENPs, is the introduction of multilateral track for activities for the 6 countries, which will include opportunities for the civil society organizations in a form of Civil Society Forum to provide an input in monitoring of the EP. In the course of discussion, the participants stressed the deficit of social dimension and prevalence of economic, security (first of all, energy supply) and trade aspects. The policy clearly needs more assertive engagement with advancing of the European Social Model and abolition not only simplification of visa procedures.

In concluding remarks the PERC General Secretary John Monks underlined importance of injection of social issues by building consultative mechanisms, and not as part of some vague “civil society”, but as social partners, particularly the unions. The PERC and the ETUC will make a submission to the EU authorities in the coming days. PERC President Mikhail Shmakov told that reference of the European Social Charter has to be made explicitly clear in these processes.

Inevitably, the crisis topic and respective trade union responses will dominate the PERC activities in the coming year, which is respectfully reflected in the PERC work plan adopted by the Executive Committee and will secure possibilities for periodical discussions and exchanges among its members over 2009 for better understanding of the challenges ahead and better orientation of trade union policies.

***The international meeting of
FES with ETUC, PERC and GUF
representatives
Belgrade, March 19th and 20th***



Since four years Friedrich-Ebert-Foundation, Regional Trade Union Project, invites the representatives of the international union movement working in South East Europe. This time there also were NGO's invited which are also engaged with unions and their main tasks.

After a very interesting discussion about the specific evaluation of all activities last year there were identified some problems and main tasks for international cooperation in this area. So all participants underlined the serious problems of unions now in the economical crisis. There is to be seen, that many deficits in unions' organisation and education now strike back two times. In most of the cases there are no strategies or mid and long term projects but only day-to-day-activities. The additional problem is of course that there are neither plans nor specific ideas of governments and employers.

The social dialogue in most of the SEE-countries still is not characterised by common considerations to solve growing unemployment on the one side and economical answers on the other side. Except from Slovenia social dialogue bodies have nearly no real influence on the policy of governments. At most there is a kind of consultation but never a real cooperated planning.

Unions mostly are lacking enough capacity especially in economical questions and also in campaigning to get more support also in the society. So all participants identified two main tasks for cooperation in the future. Firstly there should be integrated the goal in all further activities to implement knowledge and to convert it with a strong and effective organisational structure. And secondly there must be done everything to organise knowledge for developing mid and long term strategies – combining political pressure and organisational power.

At least all representatives agreed with having these meetings on a yearly basis. And more there was the idea created to invite for another meeting also representatives from SEE employers organisations to discuss the needs of bilateral and tripartite social dialogue especially in times of crisis. Also it was agreed the idea of inviting the representative of union near NGO's also to the next meetings.

Everybody felt it to be a very good idea. As more organisations are cooperating as more effective they are all together.

/PERC/

**FRIEDRICH
EBERT
STIFTUNG**




European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

News from affiliates

Symposium on economic and financial crises, and its impact on Albanian economy, Tirana, 20 March



On 20 .03.2009 in Tirana International Hotel, the KSSH held a symposium on economic and financial crises and its impact on Albanian economy.

The symposium was held in the form of debate and discussions. Except of the main national and local leaders of the Confederation, there were invited also professors from European University of Tirana, representatives of employers organizations, industry and energy investors, representatives of civil society, NGOs, economic experts of socialist parties, representatives from ILO office in Tirana.

After discussions and debates was agreed to draft a declaration which will represent not only unionist ideas, but even more with other groups of interest, to address all political structures makers, such as the parliament, government, parliamentary parties both in power and in opposition, urging them to cooperate all together, and achieve a consensus to cope the effects of the crises and minimize those.

The KSSH issued a declaration which was sent to the Albanian Government on 23.03.2009 linked with the international action called upon by the ITUC. /KSSH/

8-th of March demonstration in Belgrade



Women's sections of TUC "Nezavisnost" and SSS Serbia were together in the 8th of March street actions.

The activities were organized to promote women participation in trade union activities and were meant to start the campaign for Decent work and Decent life for 2009.

The action reminded of the historical women's fight and used the symbol "8+8+8"(8 hours of work, 8 free time hours and 8 resting hours) ' on flyers and other promotion materials. More then hundred messages were written by women in the street on a flip-chart reminding about the position of women in the society and their expectations.

During the two hours action more then two hundred questionnaires were completed on the situation of women in the informal economy. The demonstration ended with a march in the center of Belgrade demanding the authorities to pay attention to insuring decent and acceptable life conditions to the Serbian population.

/TUC Nezavisnost and SSSS /

Gender

SEE

PERC mission

BASTUN

International and European trade union policy

Pension reform

Informal economy

Gender

Youth

www.ifc.org/projects

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

- 1. Southern Region Bank - Russia**
- 2. Bankers Petroleum Ltd. (oil and gas) – Albania**

Vacancy in the ITUC-PERC Moscow office

Upcoming events:

1-3 April, Tashkent, PERC/FES gender mainstreaming in collective bargaining for Central Asia

7-8 April, Zagreb, SEE Trade Union Forum

7 April, Zagreb, PERC visit to SEE/Croatia

16-17 April, Minsk, BASTUN spring meeting

21-22 April, Brussels, Workshop on the International and the European Trade Union Policy; architecture patterns of work and cooperation

28-29 April, Skopje, PERC/FES pension reform in Macedonia

28-29 April, Tbilisi, NIS informal economy workshop

7-8 May, Sofia, Women in the economic crisis, regional workshop

9-10 July, Brussels, PERC Youth Conference

You may be interested

Basic information about these loans is copied below. For more information, please search the project number provided here in the IFC projects database (www.ifc.org/projects) or contact the Global Unions Washington Office. (mail: mmccoy@globalunions-us.org)

1. Project number 27620
Company name Bank "Yuzhniy region"
Country Russian Federation
Sector Finance & Insurance
Environmental category FI
Department Global Financial Markets Group Status
Pend PDS-IR Date SPI disclosed March 2, 2009
Projected board date April 3, 2009

2. Project number 27306
Company name Bankers Petroleum Ltd.
Country Albania
Sector Oil, Gas and Mining
Environmental category B
Department Oil, Gas, Mining And Chemicals Status
Pend FAP Date SPI disclosed February 25, 2009
Projected board date March 27, 2009

More information and vacancy notice on <http://perc.ituc-csi.org/News>

