

PERC Newsletter, June 2009

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European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) General Secretary John visited Lithuania on 11 and 12 of June.



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On 11-12 June 2009 John Monks, the General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and Pan-European Region Council (PERC) visited Lithuania for a meeting with the Baltic trade unions. The visit was a follow-up initiative of the Baltic member organisation agreed at the first discussion of the crisis in the region organised by PERC in February 2009.

During the visit J. Monks met with the Baltic trade unions' leaders, the Prime Minister and members of Government of Lithuania, Lithuanian trade union activists. Baltic countries are among EU countries, which were affected by the global crisis the most. In 2009 GDP dropped by 14% in Lithuania, by 15% in Estonia and by 18% in Latvia. Workers of Latvia particularly feel the pressure of International Monetary Fund (IMF) stabilisation programme, aimed at cutting drastically social benefits and salaries for budget sector.

In the meetings, particularly with the government, the General Secretary presented the positions of the ETUC and PERC on the current developments in the financial and economic field underlining the reservation of ETUC and calling caution towards overestimating the effects of the so called "green shoots" of recovery. He stressed the ETUC demand for more active engagement of the EU, especially in Eastern Europe to minimise the need for IMF imposed stabilisation measures.

"We spoke about what can be done to prevent the banking crisis, as well as the need for social dialogue as the key to find a way out of the situation", - said ETUC General Secretary.

In the meetings with Lithuanian and other trade

union leaders discussions touched upon issues of improving efficiency the structure and operation of labour relations systems, the need to protect encroachments on labour law and labour rights under the cover of the crisis and drew attention to clearly separate social from civil dialogue where ideas for national economic and social councils have been promoted if both are to advance the interests of the workers and civil society.

Lithuanian and other Baltic trade unions are already facing a row of such challenges and have and have been organising for protest actions to counter such attempts by their respective governments.

LPSK/PERC

The trade union response to the Challenges of the Crisis in the Baltics; the role of IFIs



In the eve of the visit of the General Secretary of ETUC and PERC John Monks to the Baltics, PERC organised an international seminar on the economic crisis in Eastern Europe with special focus on the Baltic states. The Belgian CSC provided expert and financial support for the seminar.

The event took place in Vilnius on 9-10 June 2009. The members of the trade unions and academics from the three Baltic States, from Belgium, Russia, UK, Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Poland, ETUI, PERC were discussing about the forms and impacts of the crisis in different countries, particularly under IMF stabilisation measures, on the labor market, trade union policies and their plans for a way out of the crisis and future sustainable operation of the economy.



The first day of the seminar was dedicated to learn the various positions of the different countries on the topic. The speakers made examples of how the economic situation was changing after the beginning of the Crisis in their counties and how it is now. The increasing number of the unemployment, the decreasing salaries, the importance to find the dialogue between the social partners are uniting all the countries-participants. The second day - the round table day: trade unions' activists were exchanging good practice on how to negotiate with the Government and were discussing about what is the best position to take, were learning from each other.



The seminar „The Trade Union Response to the Challenges of the Crisis in the Baltic. The Role of the IFIs“was arranged by ITUC, PERC, ACV/CSC Belgium.

/LDF/PERC/

Activities within the project
Kiev tripartite round table
Belgrade national round table
Kotor sub regional meeting

High level tripartite round table
„The social partners’ role
bringing the economy from the
shadow”, Kiev 18 June



The national round table
„Promotion of rights and
representation of workers in
informal economy“
28 May 2009, „BW Hotel M“,
Belgrade



ITUC/PERC-FNV **Informal**
Economy Project

The High-level tripartite round table “The social partner’s role bringing economy from the shadow” was organised in Kiev on 18th of June in the framework of ITUC/PERC-FNV Informal Economy Project.

The FPU, KVPU, VOST leaders and representatives of Informal Workers Union (affiliate of the VOST), employer organizations, academics, public authorities responsible for this problem attended the event. In total, the round table was attended by 60 participants.

The FPU Vice-President Sergiy Kondriuk conducted the event. At the event it was stated that informal economy estimations are various: from 31% (data of the Ministry of Economy) up to 51% (independent sources) of GDP. 70% of employees are working informally or part of salary receiving in envelopes.

Sergejus Glovackas presented situation in the other NIS countries and ITUC/PERC activities in this field. The common consensus accepted that such events should be constant.

/Vilnius office/S.Glovackas/

The participants in the national round table in Belgrade have analysed the actions in the field of combating informal economy. The main conclusions of the activity were: it is necessary to fully and thoroughly inform and educate all members of trade unions as well as persons engaged in the informal economy (especially young people and women) on the manifestations, causes, extent and consequences of this phenomenon, in order to understand what is better for them and achieve their own interests;

The informal economy is a common problem for all three social partners and an image (a mirror) of a disorganized society. It is necessary to further the work of applied multi-sectoral approach (keeping in mind the problems that occur in agriculture, construction, trade, etc.), and to include employees who work in the “gray zone” in the activities of trade unions;

It is necessary to do the networking of trade unions in the region, encourage exchange and cooperation of experts, determine the priority and to resolve the most common problems

ITUC/PERC SEE Office Sarajevo/

On June 16-17, 2009 South East European sub-

South East European Sub regional workshop, Kotor, 16-17 June



National Workshop „ European Social Charter in Promotion and Protection of Human, Workers and trade union Rights in Serbia“ ,Belgrade, 10 June 2009



regional workshop was held in Kotor Montenegro within the ITUC / PERC framework of the Informal Economy project supported by the FNV. The event was attended by Albania, Serbia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro trade union representatives responsible for the work with IE workers.

During the event the participants summed up the activities done in 2 years, presented the latest phase of the project action plans, exchanged experience, discussed sub-regional network-building plans for IE.

Find more information on <http://perc.ituc-csi.org>

The ITUC-PERC, in cooperation with its affiliates UGS „Nezavisnost“ and the Confederation of Autonomous Unions of Serbia (CATUS), organized a national Workshop „ European Social Charter in Promotion and Protection of Human, Workers and trade union Rights in Serbia“ , on 10 June 2009 in Belgrade, with the support of Norwegian trade union centre LO-Norway. Serbia recently ratified the Revised European Social Charter and it's full text was published in the Official Gazzette with the information that will be in force as from 10 June 2009. The activity was held on that day what gave to the event particular weight. The objective of the Workshop included understanding of 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 two lawyers from both TU Confederations who are members of the SEE TU Network of legal experts, in charge of monitoring and participating in the process of harmonization of the national legislations with the European standards. Some 28 trade union lawyers and other experts, representatives of the trade union women and youth structures took part in the Workshop's. Siri Relling from the LO Norway, solidarity support organization, participated too. Participants became aware that the European Social Charter guarantees social and economic human rights and that the European Committee of Social rights is the body responsible for monitoring compliance in the States Parties. They believe that full implementation of the adopted articles of the ESC will be a challenge for Serbian Government and for the trade unions as well.

/ITUC/PERC Office Sarajevo/

6 GUFs “Trade Union Modernization and Organizing in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Transcaucasia” Moscow, 2 June 2009



The opening conference of the 6GUFs “Trade Union Modernization and Organizing in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and Transcaucasia” project supported by the FNV Holland was organized in Moscow, 2 June 2009. The conference brought together different sectoral unions affiliated to the partners of the project – the IUF, the UNI, the ITF, the IMF, the BWI and the ICEM – who expressed their readiness to engage in organizing actions in their field of activities and the respective MNEs in particular. The ITUC-PERC was invited to the conference to ensure synergy with the PERC run programs in the region of NIS. The Project is supposed to cover 6 countries: Azerbaijan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, and Ukraine. The Project is mainly focused on developing skills and organizing campaigns by the GUF local affiliates preferably in the MNC identified as targets by the relevant GUF. The Project consists of 6 training blocks where 3 blocks are the main ones: Organizing Strategy, Work with MNC and Union Modernization; and 3 supporting blocks: Training the Trainers, Legal Assistance and Equal Opportunities.

While the project directed on the sectoral unions and their activities, the ITUC-PERC the ITUC affiliates and partner organizations in the NIS will benefit if their sector union members will upgrade their functional, structural and financial effectiveness.

/PERC/

BASTUN Spring meeting decided to start preparation of the Trade Union Baltic Sea Strategy 2020



The BASTUN Spring Meeting on 16-17 April decided to start a preparation for Trade Union Baltic Sea Strategy 2020. The work will take place during the Lithuanian presidency (2009-2010) and will be finalized and approved during the Norwegian Presidency (2010-2011), most probably in the autumn 2010.

BASTUN will organize in cooperation with NFS a High-level meeting on 26 November in Vilnius. In the event the trade union movement of the Baltic Sea Region can look to the future and decide on the priorities that the strategy will focus on. The High-level meeting will be the main event of the Lithuanian Presidency.

The first step of the strategic planning is to set up a working group for preparation of the high-level meeting. The aim is to have a constructive and many-sided discussion on how the trade union movement, BASTUN, its affiliates and cooperation partners can together deal with challenges trade unions are facing in the Baltic Sea Region. The working group will, in the first phase, focus on the agenda, content and practical arrangements of the meeting. After the High-level meeting the working group continues to work according to the priorities identified by the presidents.

It is also important to point out that both the high-

level meetings as well as the process of the strategic planning contribute to the Baltic Sea Labor Network (BSLN) project. The aim is twofold: to use the preparation process of the strategy as stimulation for the organizations benefit and, in other way around, to make use of results of the national BSLN actions for the strategy.

More information on <http://www.bastun.nu/BASTUN/>

News from affiliates

Strike in Estonia against the Government policies and actions towards the new Employment Contract Act



On 16th June 2009 the Estonian Trade Union Confederation - EAKL - organized a strike in protest against the recent policies and actions of the Government. It was the first time since Estonia became independent that workers from different sectors of the economy participated in a strike. Four of EAKL's branch unions mobilized their members in 15 companies involving around 1800 workers.

As expected the transport union was represented most strongly (around 700 trade unionists). Also the textile industry federation (more than 600), energy (around 300) and metal workers (100) unions were very active.

In addition to strikes many trade unions organized meetings in their companies to support the demands of EAKL. The Chairman of EAKL, Mr Harri Taliga, emphasized that workers were on strike to protect their rights and not in pursuit of wage increases. The preparations for the strike and the strike itself demonstrated clearly that united workers are a power to be reckoned with. In many companies, after receiving the strike notice, workers' shifts were changed by the employer in order minimize the impact of the strike. There were also companies where the employers used illegal threats against workers. Such threats were surprising, since EAKL had made it very clear that the strike was not against employers but against the Government.

The main reason for the strike was the unilateral action taken by the Government with regard to the new Employment Contract Act. The trade unions were protesting against the Government cutting back the guarantees of workers which were negotiated and agreed last year.

/EAKL

Manifestation in Riga "For Latvia-against the Injustice"

Around 7000 people in Riga and 7600 people in other Latvia cities participated in the manifestation "For Latvia. Against Injustice" organized by Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS). During the plenary session of the Parliament of Latvia people with slogans and speeches expressed their attitude towards the current situation in Latvia.

The Minister of Finance Mr.Einars Repse also arrived to the manifestation but was turned out of



the event by angry people. LBAS President Peteris Krigeris is satisfied with the manifestation and people's activity. During the manifestation demands to the President of Latvia, the Government, the Parliament and the European Commission were adopted. During the protest action in Daugavpils city there was a special collection of signatures to strengthen participants' demands, but in Valmiera Church people gathered for a special ceremony. During the manifestation in Riga people were addressed by trade union leaders, sportsmen, actors, pensioners, etc. representing all groups of Latvia people. Colleagues from Lithuania trade unions expressed their solidarity by a picket at the Embassy of Latvia in Vilnius.

/ LBAS/

Upcoming events:

PERC Youth Conference

9-10 July, Brussels

PERC Summer School

7-11 September, Bratislava

WDDW

7 October

Women's School

16-19 October 2009



ILO - Reporting obligations under the ILO supervisory mechanisms

Comments to the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR) (submission of observations to the Experts under Article 22 of the ILO Constitution) on ratified conventions (only) on which each country as to report on in 2009 have to be provided by the latest the end of August to the ILO's International Labour Standards Department (normes@ilo.org). Please send a copy to the ITUC. This can be done whether directly or through their regional or international bodies (ITUC in this case). On the basis of elements so provided, the Committee of Experts drafts its annual Report, which it examines in November and then publishes in March. This report serves in particular as a basis for discussion in the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) at the International Labour Conference in June. The HTUR department will soon send a circular with more complete details. The HTUR department would like to stress the importance for national trade unions to submit their comments to the ILO by the deadline. It strongly believes that the good functioning of the CEACR and of the ILO monitoring system depends on our contribution.

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 Survey was launched on 10 June in Geneva during the International Labour Conference. An on-line version can be found on the ITUC's website: <http://survey09.ituc-csi.org/> in the four official ITUC languages.

A circular containing a USB stick (including additional material in the form of audio and video interviews with trade unionists from various countries) will be sent to all affiliates to announce the launch. Affiliates will also have the possibility to order copies of the Survey, in print or on a USB stick. Kindly inform your affiliates and friendly organizations of the publication of the Survey.

Please do not forget to fill in the online questionnaire (Circular 29) on the Annual Survey. Link: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=du1%2brgbM0zt4r15dbOchvg%3d%3d>
Your feedback is important to us. The HTUR Department and the ITUC look forward to producing a Survey that will continue to better serve its affiliates and others to pursue our collective priority of defending and promoting respect for trade union and workers' rights. Please do not hesitate also to send this questionnaire to colleagues who use the ITUC Annual Survey in their daily work.

Within the HTUR department, **Nadine Thevenet** is 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 site since the last update:

1. Allianz Eurasia Healthcare - Russia
2. Bank CenterCredit - Kazakhstan

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

The European Commission Directorate General for Employment Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has organizing a Conference entitled "Equality between women and men in a time of change" on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 June 2009 in Brussels. This Conference was the opportunity to take stock of the achievements of the Roadmap and to discuss future priorities in the field of gender equality.