



The PERC NIS Regional Network Meeting

BAKU OSH MEMORANDUM

25 November 2016: The Pan European Regional Council of the International Trade Union Confederation organized the regional OSH Network Meeting for the NIS countries on 22-24 of November 2016. The country reports had highlighted some achievements and **trade** union struggle for better working conditions but also difficult conditions of health and safety in the workplace in their region.

The OSH NIS Regional Network Meeting, which was composed of **trade** union representatives from Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, Ukraine and Uzbekistan, discussed the recent developments in health and safety policies and practices and the challenges, and the steps that would be necessary to improve the situation.

The reports indicated that the deterioration of health and safety practices ran parallel to changes in forms of employment and growth of precarious employment, while at the same time labour legislation had been amended in many countries, reducing workers' rights. They also showed that still a high number of workers had been victims of work-related accidents and diseases, while the number of fatal accidents remains also high - bringing not only misery and pain to many families but also exacting a high price for society as a whole.

The reasons for these trends are manifold, however the effects and cutbacks following the years of crisis, and a decline in political interest and the will to secure safe and healthy working conditions for all, are seen as major root causes. **Trade** unions find OSH-related cutbacks unacceptable and consider more investment in prevention and the development of hazard-free workplaces as vital for all stakeholders.

With this in mind we consider it imperative that **trade** unions not only play a greater role as supervisors on OSH matters, but must also strengthen their monitoring and bargaining, educational and raising awareness role through appropriate legislation if progress is to be achieved.

The downsizing of national OSH protection and inspection systems has greatly contributed to these negative trends. Some of the widely seen discrepancies between the countries are caused by the lack of concrete strategies for prevention; the weakening of enforcement inspectorates and their role in the whole system and the missing expertise in OSH applied in small and medium enterprises. This not only translates into worsening working conditions but also harms wider interests, leading to unfair competition and undeclared work as well as providing an ideal environment for social dumping.

We call for the strengthening of social dialogue and partnerships in the field of health and safety at work in line with the ILO standards. We call for the political will to fully implement the articles of the ILO Conventions, namely Labour Inspection Convention No 81 and Occupational Safety and Health Convention No 155. We call for broader promotional role of trade unions in the area of safety and health of workers and prevention. Vigorous systems of different types of inspection and enforcement of legislation through the cooperation of authorities, employers and trade unions are crucial to any sustainable improvement. The potential for **trade** unions to promote workplace health and safety should be used at all levels, especially in times of shrinking resources. We consider the strengthening of the institution of workers technical inspectors, to whom **trade** unions provide wide support, to be of key importance here.

However, to achieve these aims the OSH has to first, be more accountable and second, eradicate the high level of underreporting of accidents and work-related illnesses. In particular, **trade** unions in the region see critical failures in risk assessment at many companies which lead to underestimating of hazards the workers are facing to. The exposure of workers to traditional hazards but also to new ones like psychosocial risks, dangerous substances with effects of work-related cancers and also environmental hazards is enormous. Therefore, we call for action!

- We need a genuine evaluation of the implementation of ILO Conventions in OSH in our countries.
- We need an action plan for improvements in OSH working conditions in countries and in the region.
- We request political action to implement such plans and bring our workplaces into the 21st century!

Talking about decent work is not enough!

We need concrete action now!

Baku, 24 November 2016