

PERC General Assembly
Agenda Item 12

Respect for social dialogue as cornerstone for democracy

1. Respect for social dialogue, and the role of independent social partners, including the full respect for trade union rights, freedom of association, the right to organise, collective bargaining, the right to strike, and full protection of trade union representatives, is a cornerstone of democracy and a pillar of the European Social Model.
2. The most recent crises have once again demonstrated that countries that have strong social dialogue and collective bargaining were able to develop effective responses and solutions and performed better from an economic and social point of view.
3. However, many countries in Europe lack effective recognition of trade unions and social partners and bipartite and tripartite social dialogue and do not guarantee an environment that is conducive to social dialogue and mechanisms that ensure the involvement, information and consultation of social partners. Too often, also the necessary instruments and mechanisms to promote collective bargaining and support employers organisations and trade unions to be able to engage in collective bargaining, in particular at sectoral and cross-sectoral levels, are missing.
4. Trade union busting practices in Europe are on the rise. There are many cases where trade union rights are not respected and enforced. In certain cases, some of the governments engage in outright oppression of trade unions, limiting their ability to represent workers and in violation of international labour standards. In many countries there is no administrative or criminal liability for violations of trade union rights, in particular interference in trade union activities and any other union-busting acts.
5. There is also an increasing and worrying confusion and mix-up between the distinct and separate roles of
 - social partners and social dialogue
 - civil society and civil dialogue.

Introduction of NGOs in social dialogue frameworks by the governments is damaging and must be rejected.

Against this background,

6. PERC considers that it is of utmost importance for countries and institutions in Europe to deliver on the respect and reinforcement of social dialogue and the full respect of trade union rights. In this framework, it is necessary to ensure support for social dialogue and adequate funding for capacity building of social partners.

7. PERC calls on national governments to:

- Respect ILO Conventions, the principles of social dialogue, role of autonomous social partners;
- Promote national level social dialogue and institutions, collective bargaining and ensure conducive environment for social dialogue and collective bargaining and strengthening capacity of social partners;
- Ensure the separation between social dialogue and civil dialogue;
- Ensure that civil society organisations are not used to undermine trade unions;
- Ensure that the prerogatives of trade unions are guaranteed.

8. We call on the European and international institutions to:

- Promote social dialogue and due recognition of social partners;
- Ensure the difference between social and civil dialogue, including in bilateral and multilateral frameworks;
- introduce social partners summits in bilateral (and multilateral) institutional frameworks.

9. PERC calls on civil society organisations to:

- Respect the role of trade unions and social partners;
- Refuse to be used by governments or employers to undermine trade unions and collective bargaining;
- Recognise and promote trade unions in their capacity of employers.