Fritz Neugebauer, president of EUROFEDOP and president of the GÖD, the Austrian public service trade union which hosted this seminar, opened the seminar and welcomed the participants, the great majority of whom had come from Eastern European and Western Balkan countries. This seminar was the last in a series of three focussing on the evolution of social dialogue in the regions concerned.

Welcoming speeches were made by Norbert Klein, of EZA (European Centre for Workers’ Questions), Reinhold Lopatka, Minister for International and European Affairs in the Federal Government of Austria and Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General of Eurofedop.
At the first day of the seminar, the situation with regard to social dialogue in Western Balkan countries was presented and discussed by Njegoš Potežica, President of the Trade Union of Administration of Serbia (SDSS) and Jadranko Vehar, Senior Trade Union Expert from Croatia. Social dialogue in those countries still goes through an initial phase and the speakers appealed for more transparency and efficiency in the development of social dialogue relations in their respective countries.

During the subsequent debate, it also showed that there is a need for establishing and implementing clear representative criteria for the social partners in the countries concerned.

The second day of the seminar was devoted to social dialogue in countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The speakers were Viorel Rotilă, University Lecturer and President of FSSDR (Trade Union of Healthcare Workers of Romania), Justas Vīlys, Coordinator of Social Dialogue in Lithuania (LDF), Csaba Őry, Member of the European Parliament and Member of the EPP Board (Hungary), Margus Tsahkna, Chairman of the Social Affairs Committee of the Parliament of Estonia and Toader Paraschiv, Vice-President of Cartel Alfa and Secretary General of SNPPC (Romania).

From their presentations, it became clear that social dialogue activities in the countries concerned ranged from rather weak (e.g. in Romania) to rather hopeful (Hungary, Estonia, Lithuania). The lack of interest towards trade union membership in some of those countries was explained as a kind of mistrust towards trade unions, as a result of the period of Communism, when trade unions were strictly government-linked.
**Conclusions**

Norbert Klein of EZA mentioned the issue of unemployment as an important challenge for the countries of Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans. Other important aspects are the need for trade union pluralism and the promotion of social dialogue relations. He appealed to the members present for continuing their efforts towards developing effective social dialogue structures in their respective countries.

Bert Van Caelenberg concluded the seminar by underlining that now there lies a task for the trade unions present in continuing their efforts towards setting up initiatives in their home countries for the benefit of their own trade union delegates. He also appealed to politics and politicians for not excluding trade unions from the debate on social policies.