Press release

XIth CONGRESS OF EUROFEDOP
Luxemburg, 18-20.04.2007

EUROFEDOP goes digital

200 delegates of civil servants’ unions in dialogue with European politician at ‘paperless congress’

On Wednesday morning 18 April, in the large congress hall of the Jean Monnet Centre the computers were waiting for the 200 participants in the XIth Congress of the European Federation of Employees in Public Services (EUROFEDOP). The computers were all connected to one single server, giving the participants access to the digital Congress book, the presentations and the photos.

The Congress was opened by Othmar Karas, Vice President of the EPP fraction in the European Parliament. He stressed the importance of public services functioning properly. ‘Without well-organised states also the EU is in a weak position,’ he said. Mr Karas mentioned the action programme of the EPP fraction, which clearly refers to the autonomy of trade unions and to their involvement in negotiations. ‘Decision-making parties and public services are interdependent, either they fail together or they are successful together,’ Mr Karas went on to say.

EUROFEDOP also maintains close contacts with the Council of Europe. EUROFEDOP endorses and takes part in the action of the Council of Europe, which has made the awakening to a European identity based on common values a top priority. The President of the Parliamentary Assembly in the Council of Europe, Mr René van der Linden, expressed his appreciation of the strong involvement of EUROFEDOP in the activities of the Council of Europe. He stressed the role of EUROFEDOP as the driving force behind the reform of the NGO Conference of the Council of Europe.

On behalf of the European Commission there was a message from Mrs Viviane Reding, European Commissioner for Information Society and Media. With regard to the developments in the telecom sector she said that the personnel always had to be taken into account, through the European Social Dialogue. A message from the employers’ side was conveyed by Mr Bernard Damiens, President of the European organisation PostEurop, which unites 43 postal operators. The European Commission showed keen interest in the paperless Congress. Though the Social Dialogue Unit in the DG Employment and Social Affairs of the European Commission was involved in the preparations for the Congress, there was unfortunately no delegation present.
On Thursday 19 April, it was shown in a captivating manner how active EUROFEDOP and its Trade Councils had been in the past five years. Trade action is obviously a high priority of Eurofedop. The guest speakers, further, went into the Congress themes. Mrs Nicole Prud’homme from the European Economic and Social Committee talked about the demographic developments and their impact on sectors such as health care. ‘The question arises if the public services are ready for major challenges such as the immigration issue and the demographic shifts,’ Mrs Prud’Homme said. Mr Raymond Langendries, MEP and member of the Social Affairs and Employment Committee, asked the participants some questions about the reform of the public services in Europe. ‘Should the public services be cut down? Does less public service mean by definition better public service? And, finally, should public services be transformed into private services?’ According to Mr Langendries, it is up to the trade unions to get better and more efficiently organised in order to gain a clear position at the negotiation table and to adopt a higher profile in response to the huge private-sector lobby.

The debates on the reform of public services in Europe could be continued in the galleries of the former monastery Abbaye de Neumünster, located in a valley of the city of Luxemburg and part of the UNESCO world heritage.

EUROFEDOP proudly welcomes a female member on its Daily Management Board, Mrs Esther Reyes Diez (Spain). After the presentation of the Policy Plan 2007-2012 by Mr Bert Van Caelenberg, who remains in office as Secretary General, the re-elected President of EUROFEDOP, Mr Fritz Neugebauer, closed the Congress on Friday 20 April. In his speech he conveyed a message from the President of the Deutsche Beamtenbund (DBB), Mr Peter Heesen. This message makes it perfectly clear that EUROFEDOP and the Confédération Européenne des Syndicats Indépendants (CESI) are in unison about trade union pluralism at the European and the international level. The President of EUROFEDOP accepts the invitation to closer cooperation, responding so to the centralist trend in Europe. The President expresses his satisfaction at the proceedings and results of the XIth Congress. EUROFEDOP again proved that it meets the European representativeness criteria.