



www.eurofedop.org

**Eurofedop Seminar
Zagreb (Croatia), 07-08.09.2012**

What progress has social dialogue made in countries of the Western Balkans?

The conference was attended by 90 participants from 22 countries.

Social dialogue is the way by which the social partners, i.e. the workers and the employers, and this on several occasions together with the public authorities, discuss the way in which they believe society should be organised with a view to achieving decent work for all. In other words, social dialogue is a basic value in the construction of our European society.

In a first chapter, social dialogue was discussed from the angle of the existing legislation. Representatives from the Council of Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee and the International Labour Organisation dealt with the subject of social dialogue by sharing their knowledge and experience, respectively in the field of the “acquis communautaire”, the European Social Charter and the items of collective bargaining and the settlement of labour disputes.

The subsequent second and third chapter focused on the practice of social dialogue in Western European and Western Balkan countries. The practice of social dialogue has been a tradition in many European countries. In the majority of countries in the Western Balkans, however, this practice is still in its initial phase or is even simply non-existent. With the present seminar, Eurofedop has wanted to give a voice to trade union delegates from the region, to find out about their local situation and what their needs are.

Thus presentations have been given on the situation of social dialogue in the countries of Denmark, the Netherlands and Malta. Subsequently, the floor was given to speakers from Slovakia, Croatia, the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia, Serbia, Albania, the Republic of Kosovo (under UN security country resolution 1244), Hungary and Romania.

Conclusions

Although the practice of social dialogue is recognised to be a tradition since many years in Western European countries, even there, as was made clear from presentations from trade union delegates from those countries, trade unions are not always recognised as full social partners and may be partly or wholly excluded from social dialogue negotiations.

Nevertheless, the situation is still the most worrying in countries of the Western Balkans. Trade unions exist and are active and are even admitted to negotiations, but on the other hand, they are often denied the full exercise of their rights and may face severe opposition from the part of government or public service employers.

The spokesmen and spokeswoman from trade unions of the Western Balkans thanked Eurofedop for the solidarity shown throughout the years and underlined the importance of continuing the involvement at European level. Only together it will be possible to bring about real changes.

As Eurofedop, we wish to underline the need for solidarity with countries of the Western Balkans. A programme for continuing our support to member organisations from the Western Balkans will be designed and discussed at Eurofedop's next Executive Committee.

In order to bring about real change, it is also important that we are aware of the importance of influencing politicians, at national level but also internationally, within the framework of institutions such as the European Parliament and the Council of Europe. Trade unions should make politicians work for the benefit of the people.