CELEBRATION OF 40 YEARS EUROFEDOP
CROSS-BORDER PROVISION OF SERVICES
Vienna (Austria), 18-20/05/2006

After a successful seminar which was concluded by a speech given by Bartos Prok, Chairman of the EPP working group on economic and social policy, Eurofedop celebrated its 40th anniversary on Saturday the 20th of May, at the beautiful location of the Boersenbae, the former stock exchange building. The President of Eurofedop, Fritz Neugebauer, held a firm speech on the position of workers in the EU. Afterwards, the Austrian Minister of Interior Affairs, Ms. Liese Prokop, called for a stronger public service for Europe.
EUROFEDOP WAS INVITED BY HIS EXCELLENCY DR. WOLFGANG SCHÜSSEL

Eurofedop created a unique momentum in Vienna when it invited experts from different fields all over Europe who discussed the future of services provision in the EU. The main aim of the seminar was to examine the consequences of a directive for services, particularly with regard to social security systems, the social economy and the quality of services. The first day of the seminar was concluded with a festive gathering at the Karzeramt where Eurofedop and its.

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Liaison Forum
"INTEGRATION OF NEW MEMBER ORGANISATIONS"
12.01.2006
Centre Borschette, Brussels

The Liaison Forum is a well-established institution for information and exchange of views with both sectoral and cross-industry social partners. In 2006, a first session of the liaison forum took place on 12.01.2006. It was more specifically intended for the presentation of social partners initiatives and the exchange of ideas and information on tools and information sources available to the social partners in this context.

The trade unions and employers gave information about initiatives that have been taken in the new countries. After an analysis of the needs, an overview of restructuring measures and the development of competencies, finally study centres have been created in these countries. To know the needs and give them necessary attention, to build up strong links, to take account of national realities and to bring around the table real responsibilities and competent people, have been the challenges.

Some of these objectives have been reached, others have not. The EU has co-financed most of these initiatives. Difficulties to sit around the table with the employers have been successfully solved e.g. by UNI in the commerce sector. The local sector on the other hand is facing a lot of difficulties to discover who the real employers are. Nevertheless, this is one of the necessary requirements for the recognition as European social partners. The quality thinking that Eurofedop built its Congress on in 1998 is also an element that is more and more getting through to these partners.

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions gave more information on its model for capacity building for social dialogue. This institute also gave a demonstration on the use of its website. In this respect, especially the “Industrial Relations Dictionary” was explained. An expert of the division EMPL/D1 and TAEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument, http://taex.cec.eu.int/) outlined the possibilities of getting financial support. They can send experts and finance workshops and translations.

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EUROFEDOP PARTICIPATES IN LIAISON FORUM
Brussels, 19.06.2006

Eurofedop attended the Social Liaison Forum of the European Commission in Brussels. The Liaison Forum brings together social partners to discuss the results of consultation processes, multi-sectoral agreements that have been achieved, and the latest actions of the Commission regarding social dialogue, social rights and working conditions. Jacky Morin, Head of Unit – Social dialogue and industrial relations, chaired the meeting. He first explained the action plan and upcoming events. On 14 September 2006 a conference will take place dealing with “Mobility and the role of social partners” and the Commission will also follow up the Green Paper on Demographic changes. In addition to this, the Commission will further elaborate the new strategy for health and safety. Eurofedop had already planned seminars on these topics too so it will be dealing with the policy issues when the legislation process is still in full swing.
EUROFEDOP ASKS ACTIONS FROM THE EUROPEAN UNION

“Migration health care workers prevents patient care”

During a well-attended session of Eurofedop’s sector Health Services, chaired by Esther Reyes Diez (SATSE-Spain), in Luxembourg, the first item discussed was the draft document (2006/2015) on the protection of health care workers from infections caused by needlestick injuries. For Eurofedop, Chris Vabbelemont (ACV-Openbare Diensten) gave a survey of actions undertaken by Eurofedop with a view to urging the European Parliament to give this item the necessary attention. Dr. Jorge Costa-David of the European Commission (DG Employment and Social Affairs, Unit D4 – Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work) gave extensive information on the present evolution in this matter and indicated possible legal ways. Bert Van Caelenbergh referred to today’s discussion in the European Parliament and stressed how important this matter is for the new countries. He asked the Commission to aim already for results at this stage, through the organisation of projects for the exchange of best practices.

A second and not less important subject was the “migration of workers in the health care sector”. Marcela Garticová (SLOVES, Slovakia) gave information on the health care sector in Slovakia. The participants were shocked by learning that today, in Slovakia, it is only possible to operate on people during three days a week, due to the enormous lack of staff in this country. After the enlargement of the EU in 2004, there was fear for the effects that could be caused by migration, both in the EU of the 15 and in the “new” countries. The countries of the EU-15 were afraid of the enormous wave of Central and Eastern European workers they would have to face and, in turn, the countries from Central and Eastern Europe were afraid that some of their qualified staff would migrate to the EU-15, because of the higher salaries there. This is precisely what happens in the health care sector and negatively influences the functioning of health care systems in countries such as Slovakia, Czech Republic, Poland and Hungary, that have just gone through a transition process. The international mobility of health care workers is not a new phenomenon, but the migration of workers from less developed to more well-to-do countries has increased enormously these last few years. This trend is also visible in Europe and explains why health care systems of the “new” countries have to deal with a loss of qualified staff. In 2004, in Slovakia, for example, 363 doctors went abroad and, these last two years, this number has probably even increased. The main reason why these people leave their country is the more attractive salary they can earn in some of the EU-15 countries.

Following the Trade Council Health Services, Eurofedop is working on the follow-up of this subject. Thus, it is looking for partners it can jointly fight the problems in relation to migration with. This theme should be given more attention at European level and Eurofedop can play an important role in this. On the basis of the input of its member organisations, Eurofedop will use its mandate to raise this subject at European level, as, after all, this is a problem that reaches beyond the national borders. Contacts have already been sought with the European Commission and HOPE. The mobility within Europe, that of students but also that of workers, is an objective to aim for, however, this should happen in a careful manner, in a way that is equal for all. Exchange involves more than just migration, therefore, it is of essential importance that inequalities within the European policy are removed as quickly as possible.

Another subject at this Trade Council Health Services was the strategic plans 2006-2012 of the INGO grouping Health of the Council of Europe. Paul De Raeye, chairman of the grouping, was the spokesman. The Community action programme in the field of public health (2003-2008) and the conference ‘Does It Work? Next Generation Care in the Information Age’ were other items dealt with during the meeting.

To conclude, it was insisted that national authorities would cooperate in the collection of statistical data on the number of nursing staff. This info is very important for EUROSTAT, that can use this information in the accomplishment of its policy supportive task.
Eurofedop was represented at the launching of the first book of Health First Europe (H.F.E.), “2050 a Health Odyssey”, that took place in the European Parliament in Brussels on 2 February 2006. Our position of the Trade Council Health Services was included in the book.

Especially the presence of Mr David Byrne, former Commissioner charged with health care in Europe, was noticed. Just as Eurofedop, he contributed in an important way to the realisation of the book, thanks to the introduction of an article.

The book is a collection of ideas, preoccupations and reflections on the future of European health care. It was achieved thanks to contributions of a variety of authors ranging from representatives of patients groups, academicians and industrialists to politicians and organisations of health care workers such as Eurofedop.

The intention of the book is to promote dialogue and encourage the political debate on European health care. Especially worth mentioning is that all authors indicate that it is of essential importance to hold firm for a while and reflect on the consequences of the fact that an adequate global policy plan and framework are missing and still waiting to be produced.

During a working lunch ample opportunity was given to the participants to exchange ideas on the future of European health care with the European Parliament Member who was present. One of the main discussion items is and remains the financing, accessibility and especially the affordability of European health care in the longer run. Anyway, what has become very clear is that, from now until 2050, quite some member states of the European Union will still have a lot of work to do with a view to taking the appropriate and usually fundamental reforms required to safeguard their social security system both at financial level and with regard to social sustainability. Thus the idea was mentioned for a while to grant less European subsidies or none at all to the cultivation of all products that are harmful to the health of man.

After all, health is one of the pillars of our European economic growth and development. Hence the need for better investments in the European health care sector as an essential requirement for the development of Europe.
UGL Second Confederal Congress

Rome (Palace of Congresses), 02-04.02.2006
Polverini is the new General Secretary; Cetica is the President.
Remata Polverini, 43 years old, is the new General Secretary of Ugl.
She succeeds Stefano Cetica, who becomes the new President of the organisation.
Polverini is the first woman who is leader of a trade-union, in Italy.

European Parliament votes in favour of needlestick report
European Parliament, Brussels - 06.07.2006

On 6 July, the European Parliament adopted the report on “needlestick injuries” with 465 votes in favour, 18 against and 13 abstentions. The Parliament states that the existing legislation on the protection of health care workers does not have the desired effect, and therefore should be amended. It believes that many of the injuries could be prevented by for example better training, and safer needles. It was the third time that the Parliament tried to vote on the report, in early June it was postponed and the second time it was sent back to the committee. Let us hope that the European Commission responds urgently and above all positively to this resolution from the Parliament. After all, it is intended to protect all of Europe’s health care workers!
The topic of injuries caused by contaminated needles was also discussed during our Trade Council meeting Health care services on 19 June 2006. The brochure can be found on Eurofodop’s website.

SEMINAR EUROFEDOP - EZA
Tallinn (Estonia), 02-03.03.2006
Adapting the structures of European social dialogue - work organisation and environment

The two-year project is designed for workers’ organisations in the Central and Eastern European countries of the European Union and the candidate countries. It aims to identify the different status of social dialogue in the Central and Eastern countries of the EU and the candidate countries, show possibilities for strengthening social dialogue and define the need for adaptation (taking the general legal conditions into consideration as well) in the European process of integration.

Issues to be dealt with in depth are those of workers’ right to co-decision, flexible working hours, teleworking, obligatory presence at work and the influences of project-specific work.

The idea is to take a closer look at the impact these phenomena have on the compatibility of family and work.
The aim of the evaluation seminar is to evaluate the results of the ten working groups that have met during the year in the Central and Eastern European countries.
Profile of participants: Representatives of workers’ organisations acting as multipliers in their particular sphere, and of trade unions, primarily from Central and Eastern Europe.

First Congress of the National Trade Union for the Police and Contractual Personnel (SNPPC)
13-14.07.2006
Sinaia (Romania)

The two seminars and bilateral contacts with various police trade unions of Eurofodop, the SNPPC held its first official congress. President Viorel Constantini and Secretary General Panschik Toader took a historical step with the creation of this new organisation for the police in Romania. Only now, the politicians have understood that the discussion on the “Acquis communautaire” (the conditions for affiliation to the EU) also places them before some responsibilities.
The SNPPC, member of Cartel Alfa and member of the EPU-Eurofodop, wants to further intensify its cooperation with the ACP (Netherlands), the AVZ-Openbare Diensten (Belgium) and the GÖD/FCG (Austria).

Apart from the speeches, this Congress also reserved some time for the discussion with the congress participants. Hermann Feiner, chairman of the EPU, gave some clarification on subjects such as the working time, occupational diseases and the employment of civilians at the police. The secretary general of Eurofodop, Bert Van Caelenbergh, mentioned the little use of performing visits, from the start of the trade union, to other trade unions, with large delegations. He pleaded for a close cooperation with Cartel Alfa with a view to the elaboration of a basic training for trade union delegates. In collaboration with Eurofodop’s representative for the public services in Romania and member of the Executive Committee, Ion Mihăiță, we wish to support such initiatives.

Finally, let us quote a statement from one of the leading police officers participating: “It is more difficult to hold discussions, than to give orders”. After the holidays, it will be possible to further develop contacts, at the meetings in Luxembourg.
EUROFEDOP was present at a press conference with Commissioner Spidal on ‘Workers’ Mobility’
18.07.2006
Brussels (Belgium)

In 2005, the European Commission designated the year 2006 as the year of the workers’ mobility. It aimed at raising awareness of, and making European Citizens understand the benefits of working abroad. 2006 is the first year which combines mobility and the issue of workers. EU Commissioner Vladimir Spidla presented the half-way assessment of this European Year of Workers’ Mobility today in the Berlaymont building in Brussels. Commissioner Spidla briefly pointed out the results that have been visible so far. He stated that a lot of progress has been made and the situation has improved, which creates better chances to stand the consequences of globalization. Two months after the launch of the Year of workers’ mobility, the number of consultations on the EURES platform (which is the European Job Mobility Portal) almost doubled from 50,000 to over 90,000. When speaking of geographic mobility, people seems to go abroad for short periods, and around 2% of EU citizens are living abroad. If we continue looking at percentages, Belgium has the highest rate (1.7%) of mobility of its workers, who are usually employed in its neighbouring countries. The mobility rate between member states is quite weak and has only increased the past few years. Inevitably, there still exist many obstacles with regard to workers’ mobility, from practical matters (language, accommodation) to judicial and administrative issues (different retirement schemes, insurance and tax systems etc.). Finally, in mid-July a European Mobility Prize was launched for the individual, company or organisation that promoted mobility most significantly during the year. These prizes will be awarded at the end of the year. Eurofodop attended the press conference because it is important to follow the developments with regard to the mobility issue in Europe. It goes without saying that Eurofodop focuses on the mobility of civil servants within the Union. We also look at the issue of ‘migration’ which is visible in Europe for example within the health care sector. In November, we will organise an event on the issue of migration of health care workers.

For more information on the European Year of Workers’ Mobility take a look at the following website: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/workersmobility_2006/index.cfm

EU Commissioner Vladimir Spidla

The Impact of E-Government in Europe: What About the Employees?
13.09.2006
Helsinki (Finland)

EUROFEDOP attended a conference on e-Government which primarily focused on measuring the impact of e-Government in Europe so far. The objective of the event, hosted by the Finnish Presidency of the EU in collaboration with SAP and Capgemini, was to track the progress of the e-Gov Action Plan (2006-2010) with the motto ‘partnership with industry’. The latter set the tone of the entire conference during which the impact on the employees, the actual providers of the services, was hardly

eu2006.fi

The e-Government action plan is part of the EU’s goals to achieve “significant reductions in administrative burdens” by 2010. Effective and efficient e-Government was one of the five topics defined in the Ministerial e-Government Conference held in Manchester last year (also attended by Eurofodop). It seeks to use IT to improve the consumers’ experience of public services as well as reducing costs (particularly to business) of dealing with governments and improving the transparency of governments. In 2005, during a personal conversation with Viviane Reding, former EU Commissioner for Information Society, Bert van Casteelberg handed over the position of Eurofodop with regard to e-Government. At that time, it was stressed that e-Government has a major impact on public service employees, and that this aspect was not highlighted sufficiently in the EU proposals. Ms. Reding actually mentioned the role of the “workers” during her speech in 2005, a comment that was naturally warmly welcomed by Eurofodop. e-Government has a great influence on the structure and the working method within the public administration. It can not only lead to less work, but also to more work and in any case to other work. This requires a lot of adaptability from the employees’ side, who are expected to act more quickly, more creatively and more efficiently with the possibilities that e-Government offers. However, they also face a whole range of new technologies and renewed software and hardware they have to adapt to. New forms of work often require other, more highly skilled workers; social dialogue is hereby the most suitable platform for an open discussion. Eurofodop acknowledges and is aware of the chances that there are in this field, however, it questions whether most will profit from these developments (the industry?).

Although the conference was interesting and had an impressive list of speakers, Eurofodop was disappointed not to hear any concrete impact assessments, or action plans for the employees who, in the end, are the ones who actually provide the services. It is therefore highly important to continue the negotiations and to continue expressing our views and positions. As agreed on the Executive Board meeting in February this year, the issue of e-Government should be put on the agenda of every Trade Council meeting, in order to collect positions from all sectors which refer to the role of the workers in the implementation and development of e-Government. We cannot deny that e-Government is the future, however, we have to make sure that it is implemented in a ‘worker-friendly’ manner and that the voice of the worker, or the Trade Unions, will always be heard.

For more information please visit:

e-Government Good Practice Framework:
TRADE COUNCIL JUSTICE

Luxembourg (Jean Monnet Centre), 10.02.2006
The Trade Council Justice of Eurodolop held its annual session on 10 February 2006 in the Jean Monnet Centre in Luxembourg.

4 themes were dealt with during the session:

- First of all, there was the great concern caused by the growing absenteeism due to illness of the staff of prisons. The trade council decided to give this item the necessary follow-up and, on the basis of a well-built file, appeal both to the EU and the Council of Europe for giving this item the necessary consideration.

- The trade council also noted with satisfaction, on the basis of an introduction given on the reform of Penal Law in Austria, that the EU countries are making great efforts to bring their penal law in accordance with each other. A common mini-platform is starting to show itself... However, it is not clear yet what the consequences of this will be for the staff of Justice. The trade council will remain alert to the evolution in this respect.

- Judge Cristinolla, Judge at the Court of Appeal, Direction Anti-Mafia Investigation, made it clear to us that there is a need for the creation of a “prisons police”. According to him, it is unacceptable that prisoners can continue to lead their criminal empire from prison. A speech that gave us further matter for reflection.

- Finally, a short introduction was given on the changing legal position of detainees in Belgian prisons. In this respect, consideration was also given to the consequences of this for the staff of prisons (the law Dupont and its consequences).

Follow-up will be given to the absenteeism due to illness of the staff of prisons. Moreover, the consequences of the reform of Penal Law for the staff of Justice will be given proper attention.

STRIKE ACTION BY PRISON OFFICERS

You will be aware, following recent press and media coverage that POA members working in prisons in England and Wales have voted overwhelmingly for industrial action, up to and including a strike.

You will recall that in 1993 the Tory Government removed trade union rights for Prison Officers and returned them in 1994, with restrictions. This included a law that criminalised Prison Officers or any who induced this, to take industrial action. Labour in opposition promised to return full trade union rights to Prison Officers. Although, the offending Section 127 was removed from statute in 2003, it was only done on the insistence that the POA signed an Industrial Relations Provision (no strike) Agreement.

The POA has witnessed Prison Service Management’s attempt to influence the so-called “independent” Pay Review Body and prevent disputes being placed before any independent Arbiter on a number of occasions, all of which is in breach of the so-called ‘legally binding Agreement’.

The Union believes we should have all trade union rights returned immediately, the right to collective bargaining and to take industrial action in the furtherance of a dispute.

We recognise however, that this will be a difficult path, but in the meantime, we demand fair treatment from truly independent bodies, that are not directed by the Employer or Government.

It is clear from the threats and action that the Government will use (once again) the Courts and sequestration against the POA. We for our part will stand firm for justice for our members.

The POA believe that our stance for a fair pay system and independent dispute resolution lies at the heart of the trade union.

PUBLIC SERVICES NOT PRIVATE PROFIT

April 2006

Rally & Lobby of Parliament

Public services and public service workers are facing unprecedented pressure from Government plans for privatisation and job cuts. Across virtually every area of public service and with virtually no consultation, proposals are being brought forward to hand over services to the private sector at seemingly no matter what the cost to either the taxpayer or service users.

In health, education, local government, prisons and probation and in every department of central government the Government in forcing services into the private sector. The Government’s Education and Inspections Bill is just the most recent example of the threat to the very concept of public services. Even where the private sector has failed and services taken back into the public sector, as in the railways, the Government is re-privatising them!

Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at stake. The pay, pensions and conditions of employment of public services workers are under threat. Services which our community relies upon are at risk.
European Social Model

Jackie Morin (Head of Unit F/1 Social Dialogue, DG Employment and Social affairs, European Commission) threw light on the question of what we, public services, expect from the European Social Model? He emphasised the role of social partners in Europe and called upon Eurofeder, among other partners, to be more pro-active and to strongly participate in consultation processes.

Epilogue

To conclude two days of intense though interesting discussions, Mr. Christoph Weiskirchen (Secretary general EUCDW, EPP) held a speech in which he ranged himself on the side of Jackie Morin by saying that Europe does listen to its employees. He called for more pro-active trade union participation and stressed the fact that it is highly important that social partners always express their positions on EU initiatives concerning social policies.
EUROFEDOP DISCUSSES ‘TOLERANCE ON THE WORKFLOOR’
08-09.09.2006
Jurmala (Latvia)

Secretary General Bert Van Caenegem spoke at a conference in Latvia which was entitled “Tolerant approach, tolerant organization, tolerant people: practical tolerance”. This conference was organised by the rector of the Latvian Christian Academy, Skaidrite Gātmane, and Secretary General of the European Middle Field organisation (EUROMF), Bruno Machiels. After Prof. Jihun Yoo had explained the concept of tolerance in the context of the employers-employees relations, Bert Van Caenegem stressed the importance of the social dialogue. In his speech he stated that there is no ‘European tolerance in workers’ relations’ without a social dialogue. The introduction of such a social dialogue will not be for tomorrow and the question of the representation of the Member States within the inter-professional social dialogue remains problematic. In addition to this, there remain important differences between the practices of Member States and some are very reluctant to engage in any formal agreements. Eurofedop has, however, adopted a pragmatic and realistic trade union attitude that is orientated towards the improvement of these informal structures of social dialogue. Finally, he emphasised that Eurofedop intends to make the most of the opportunities and will be a constructive partner.

The conference dealt with ‘Practical Tolerance’ and contained speakers from Europe and the United States. A noteworthy contribution came from Mrs. Karina Petersone, Latvian Minister for Social Integration. She mentioned the setting up of an office and a website especially for questions related to tolerance at the workplace. Additionally, she brought up the issue of tolerance with regard to the minorities in her country, of which the Russian is of course the most important one. This problem is being addressed at the highest level, as Mrs. Petersone is talking about it with her Russian colleagues.

With this conference, EUROMF Secretary General Bruno Machiels has launched a next step in the training and educating of middle-field and trade union organisations in Latvia. It was organised in the framework of seminars that were co-financed by the EU. Finally, a joint evaluation seminar will take place in one of the Baltic States in 2007.

Links
http://www.eza.org
http://www.euromf.org
http://www.kra.lv/english.htm

PPP” AND “INFO SOCIETY” FOR OUR REGIONS
11.10.2006

On 09-12 October, the European Commission (DG Regio) and the Committee of the Regions organised the 4th edition of the ‘Open Days’, a week which is completely dedicated to development, innovation, competitiveness and sustainability of the regions in Europe. Participants from over 135 regions in Europe could attend and participate in seminars and workshops throughout the city of Brussels. Eurofedop attended a seminar on Public Private Partnership (PPP) in regions. European Commissioner in charge of Regional Policy Ms. Danuta Hilsenrath held a speech and underlined the complexity of partnerships between players in the public and private sectors. She explained that the public sector does not have the capacity to carry out large scale projects. To quote the EU Commissioner Ms. Hilsenrath: “To be brutally frank, we do not think we can make it without private capital joining us”. Other speakers at the meeting were Mr. Maxime Bureau from General Electrica, Mr. Olivier Desande from the European Investment Bank and finally Mr. Jan Olbrecht, MEP, who chaired the seminar. Although some of the participants tried to focus more on the public side and on the quality of services delivered by the public sector, the focus was obviously more on companies and large investors. Successful examples were given of Private cooperation with public such as the lighting of cities or hospitals, or the security of prisons. All speakers agreed on the fact that PPP’s that involve additional EU funding are even more complicated to execute than those who do not.

The idea of PPP’s is that the public and private sector work together. The public sector provides the appropriate infrastructure whilst the private sector secures the financing. Ideally, this could be beneficial for companies, government and users! It is clear, however, that we must stay critical and always focus on the quality of the services delivered, as well as the providers and their working conditions.

Is your region connected?

The second seminar dealt with the question of how “connected” regions are. ‘Is your region connected to the Information Society?” was the main question that speakers from different fields and with different interests elucidated for us. Excerpts from Microsoft, Hewlett Packard and Intel explained how they had worked together with cities and regions to get them connected. Increasing connectivity of regions is important in the process of bridging the digital divide and getting more economic and social benefits across Europe. E-government is a topic that Eurofedop is dealing with a lot. We should acknowledge the benefits that e-government can bring, and we have to accept that our societies are changing and ICT plays a bigger role today as it has ever done before. As an organisation representing the employees in local and regional administrations too, however, we have to be wary of this group getting the chance to adapt to these changes in a dignified way and getting all the training, education and support they need.

More information:
www.opendays.europe.eu
Today, we know that a lot of money can be made with postal delivery. However, unless we create legal framework conditions to define the universality of postal services while offering financial guarantees for them, we run the risk of profit maximisation taking the upper hand.

It should be our aim to secure in the medium and long term the quality of the postal services to the European population as well as the high-quality jobs in this branch.

We strongly turn down an American model, according to which several employment contracts are necessary to provide for one’s family.

The Trade Council Post and Telecom within EUROFEDOP therefore calls on us, and particularly on the member states that have just started reorganising their postal services, to offer subsidiarily the opportunity to keep the maximum weight of 100 g for letters a reserved service also after 2009.

Manfred Wodnar
President of the Trade Council Post and Telecom

Competition alone particularly in postal services will not create jobs!

It will not bring about more letters being written or more packages being sent. That is why all-out efforts must be made to ensure the quality of the postal jobs and to prevent salary dumping and the inherent social dumping.

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At the invitation of the President of PHDSZSZ, András Lázár, trade unions from Hungary, Serbia, Croatia, Slovakia met in Balatonlelle (Hungary), in the presence of a number of observers, among whom a delegate of Austria.

The current political situation in Hungary was explained to us by president András Lázár. He is confident that the democratisation process will go on and acts for the benefit of his organisation. He regrets that extremists, both from the left and the right, do not make use of the democratic rules in the way that these should be used, in Hungary. The government keeps gradually reducing its support to trade unions, both morally and financially, which will ultimately lead to changes within the trade union structures.

The participants wish to congratulate the president with the initiative of this meeting and underline that this meeting is a sign of our wish to be constructive rather than destroy things. In this beautiful setting, in ideal weather conditions at lake Balaton, the participants decided to give structure to their cooperation relations, by means of a common statement, after having heard the information on local situations given by the different countries. This statement will appear on the agenda of the Trade Council Post and Telecom of 15.12.2006 in Luxembourg.

Bert Van Caelenberg, secretary general of Eurofedop, gave more information about current European dossiers in relation to Post, the Directive on total liberalisation in 2009, Telecom, multinationals, the commission on social responsibility. The Acquis Communautaire, signed by the member states, can and may not remain dead letter. Thus the basic right of freedom of association is often neglected by governments of the new member states.

More attention has to be paid to the relation with the citizens, the universal service provision and the role of the national regulators. Massive dismissal can only be prevented if proper training is guaranteed to older workers (50+). “Think globally, act locally”.

Trade unions without a solid basis are doomed to disappear, concluded Bert Van Caelenberg.
SEMINAR VIENNA

Ten different experts from all over Europe shared their positions on the directive on services in the EU with the participants (up to 200). The presentations were followed by heated debates that showed once again how sensitive this proposal for a services directive is. MEP Ottmar Karas, Vice President of the EPP-ED, made an attempt to reassure the audience by stating that the current draft directive contains warrants preventing “social dumping”. In addition to this, he called for a broad acceptance of the directive, as it will contribute to a strong, open, internal market for services which allows a simple cross-border provision of services. He also emphasised the (strong) role of the European Parliament, which has acted as it should have, namely as the voice of the people of Europe. Professor Brian Edwards, President of HOPE, (the European Hospital and Healthcare Federation) pointed out that investment in high-quality health services in Europe is of utmost importance. Given the legal uncertainty there exists with regard to the services directive, Dr. Alexander Egger, First Legal Secretary of the First Advocate General, held a speech in which he gave some clarification on the legal framework of the directive, which is often said to be rather weak. Facilitating cross-border provision of services is one of the main objectives of the proposed services directive, which has been amended by the European Parliament in February 2006 and has undergone the second reading last September.

Uncertainty concerning the control of this cross-border provision of services has changed the attitude of public service workers towards this directive. Simplification of administrative formalities will have considerable effects on the daily work of public service workers in Europe. Eurofeder and its members welcomed the amendments of the European Parliament after the first reading which resulted, among others, in the exclusion of services of general interest such as health services.
EUROPEAN TRADE UNION MEETING IN BELGRADE

Eurofedop sent a delegation to Belgrade, Serbia, to attend a seminar in which all Serbian member organisations participated. Among the guests were Ms. Jasmina Damjanović, Deputy Director of the Government secretariat for legislation and Mr. Milan Bobić, Chairman of the managing board of Telekom Srbija. The topics discussed at the seminar included social dialogue and the role and representation of trade unions. It was decided that a conference will be organised (early 2007) about modernisation of public administration, social dialogue and Human Resources. Ms. Damjanović backed this plan and was, also during this seminar, prepared to fully engage in the discussion on the role of trade unions and the future of EU-Serbia relations. Mr. Nigud Poljčica, member of the Eurofedop executive board, explained the current situation and problems in trade union actions in Serbia. Although a successful seminar, it became clear that in the Justice sector in particular, the labour relations are currently under pressure and the sector should perhaps welcome the social dialogue much more. Major progress was visible in the telecom sector as well as in the administrative sector; however, it seems that unfortunately, the justice sector is clearly lagging behind.

TRADE COUNCIL DEFENCE 2006

In the Defence sector too, the Europe-wide developments are noticeable. The demographic challenges that many EU Member states face nowadays, certainly affect the defence systems in these countries too. A major problem is the ageing problem in Europe; the military personnel too are getting older. A growing pension burden plus a shrinking pool of recruitment, brings the sector in a peculiar position. This is happening at a time when it is crucial for Europe to discuss its defence issues as it faces more and more complex security threats, at a national, European and global level.

At the Trade Council meeting on Defence, Ms. Coorens, Deputy Chief Director Personnel of the Danish Ministry of Defence, explained the structures of the personnel system in the defence sector in the Netherlands. She mentioned the problems of ageing personnel too and spoke about different instruments that are being used in order to improve the flexibility of the personnel. Our colleagues from Belgium and the Netherlands regularly discuss the problems occurring in the sector. Eurofedeop’s trade council meetings offer a perfect arena for such debates and defence unions from all over Europe are present to share ideas and knowledge with their colleagues. Discussions on pensions systems for defence personnel, and flexible/alternative careers for the age group 30-35 are now in full swing. Eurofedeop is hoping for a solid framework in which future cooperation can take place. It is also important that Europe and its member states invest in the training and education of its defence personnel, in attracting a new generation, and in improving the ‘employability’ of the employees in order to keep them active on the labour market after the age of 35 too.

TRADE COUNCIL POLICE 2006

Ms. Frieda Brepoels, MEP was one of the key speakers on the Trade Council meeting on police issues. Ms. Brepoels, being the rapporteur for the report on closer cross-border police cooperation at international events in the EU, shared her profound knowledge of police work with Eurofedeop’s members representing employees in this sector. She stressed that it is of utmost importance for policy makers as well as for employees to exchange thoughts and experiences on this issue. The report on closer cross-border police cooperation searches for a European framework, while also respecting the subsidiarity principle and the role of the national, regional and local authorities. This makes cooperation between different European police forces extremely complex. Participants expressed their fear of a growing gap between ‘Brussels’ and the employees on the work floor or in the streets. The connection and communication between the two need to be reinforced, said Tjitske Horst (ACP, the Netherlands). It became clear that the question of competencies is difficult. Ms. Brepoels explained that particular things fall outside the scope of the European Parliament’s competencies; its powers are rather quite limited.

As a follow-up to the Trade Council meeting, we are now setting up a project within the Euregons to examine the problems they face regarding police cooperation.