

Western Balkans Seminar

Capacity building for social dialogue in the health sector

Vienna (Austria), 30-31.10.2017

Short Report



Once more, Eurofedop gathered its members from the Western Balkans to discuss an important subject in their process towards becoming fully fledged trade unions in their home countries.

In particular, the seminar focused on the need for representatives of health care workers to acquire the necessary skills to participate in collective bargaining discussions in their respective countries (Slovenia, Croatia, Slovakia, Serbia, Ukraine, Hungary, Montenegro, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Ireland).

Greeting words were pronounced by vice-president of EZA and president of Eurofedop, Fritz Neugebauer, as well as Norbert Schnedl, president of the GÖD. In particular, the GÖD president spoke about the successful social model as it has been functioning in Austria since the second World War.



Members and experts from Slovenia, Hungary and Croatia were given the floor to give presentations on the system as it works, or does not work in their home countries. The moderator was Otto Aiglsperger of the GÖD/FCG.

Jelka Mlakar provided information on the social dialogue structure in Slovenia, as well as on the instruments they use to recruit and retain healthcare workers.

Social dialogue in the healthcare sector in Austria is not easy, due to regional fragmentation, but there is a national consultation organism which functions. However, its collective agreements are not always implemented by the regions.

Social dialogue in the healthcare sector in Hungary has gradually disappeared with Viktor Orbán becoming Prime Minister of the country.

After speeches from M. Varacova from Slovakia and information on the situation in Croatia, a debate was held on questions regarding migration, dead dialogue, relations with doctors and hospital management, as well as stress in emergency services.



The moderator at the start of the second seminar day was Pat Cuffe, Human Resources Expert of Ireland. The floor was given to representatives from trade unions from Ireland, Austria, Ukraine, Croatia, Serbia and Slovenia. The differences in remuneration between European countries in the health care sector was recognised as an important reason for the 'brain drain' of healthcare workers from poorer to richer countries. Moreover, it was recognised that money is not the only reason why countries are in a continuous struggle for finding healthcare workers. Often, what healthcare workers need, is mental support, to receive appreciation for the work they do. And that is why they need social dialogue.



The moderator at the last session of the seminar was Jadranko Vehar, social dialogue expert of Croatia. He gave the floor to Mr Meho Mahmutovic, State Secretary in the Ministry of Health of Serbia, who gave more information on the policy and objectives of his country in the field of healthcare. Like most European countries, Serbia was severely hit by the crisis and had to follow a policy of austerity. Nevertheless, in spite of the

hardship, this policy was determined in consultation with all relevant stakeholders, ministries, trade unions and the administration. Today, the situation has improved and Serbia is making important investments in the field of the modernisation and specialisation of its healthcare.

The last speaker at the seminar was Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General of Eurofedop. He underlined that the European Commission insists on the need for social partners to increase their capacity of participating in social dialogue. This is not only a responsibility for the social partners themselves, but governments must also provide for the legal framework which makes it possible for social dialogue to function.



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