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Prison Officers' Association – POA-Ireland

Kilkenny (Ireland), 19-20.04.2018

2018 Annual Conference

At the invitation of John Clinton, general secretary of the POA, Bert Van Caelenberg, secretary general of Eurofedop, attended the annual conference in Kilkenny.

During the session, more than 200 delegates discussed the reports of the general secretary, the deputy general secretary (Jim Mitchell) as well as the assistants general secretary Gabriel Keaveny and Kim Dalton.

Real trade union subjects, relating to Pay and Allowances, Pension Matters, Sick Leave, Equality, the Employee Assistance Service, the Retirement Function, the Prisoner Complaints/Code of Discipline, the ICTU Public Services Committee, Eurofedop/CESI and the Justice Departmental/Civil Service General Councils over the past twelve months were outlined in detail in the Headquarters Report to Conference (319 pages).



Furthermore, there was the debate on the motions. Here no endless debates as we have known from time to time with the POA in the UK, but a structurally well-organised presentation and discussion of motions on Pay and Allowances (10), Pensions (2), Promotions (3), Prisoner Complaints (1), Criminal Injuries (2), Health and Safety (1), Sick Leave (1), Control and Restraint (2), Policy (18). Motions which, introduced by the departments of Limerick, Wheatfield, Midlands, Castlereagh, Mountjoy, Cork, etc., had been discussed in advance and which also received much attention from colleague trade unions from Ireland, Scotland, the UK and Eurofedop, which had been invited to the conference as guests.

A non-annual theme was the Consultant's Review of the Cuffe Report. In 2007, the annual meeting had decided to carry out a thorough review of the operations of the POA and to examine its structure from National Level down to Branch Level. The report was subsequently submitted to the annual meeting of 2009, which also took place in Kilkenny.

Now, 10 years later, the Consultant, Pat Cuffe, had completed an update of his report. (On various occasions, Pat Cuffe has also participated as expert in Eurofedop seminars.) He was present at the Conference and held a presentation on his findings.

As it would lead us too far to discuss here the whole of the author's report, we prefer to bring under attention some of the report's recommendations:

"Any organisation that believes having completed a major project, that no further action is required, are certain to ultimately fail. In the current climate doing nothing is not an option and nor should it be."

"The current hierarchy in the POA are eminently qualified and experienced in the work that they too carry out."

"The branch network is the most important element within the entire POA organisation. Without the members and the branches there is no POA. This area must be strengthened when at all possible. Each member has their role in making the branch more efficient. Each branch has their role in ensuring that the branch contributes to the best of their ability to the NEC."

With this last paragraph, I want to complete this report. Eurofedop is proud to have such an organisation among its members. An organisation which dares to go back to the roots of trade unionism, the basic working. A choice which some European organisations should also try to make from time to time.

"The NEC and the four (4) full-time officials are there to assist the branches in training and the management of their own branches. All working together and understanding each other, will without doubt drive the Prison Officers' Association forward for the next number of years."



Apart from the speeches which were held on Thursday 19/04 by the Minister of Justice, and some leading Civil Servants, it has been an honour to be given the opportunity to take the floor as Eurofedop at this 71st Annual Conference.

Kilkenny, 20/04/2018
Bert Van Caelenberg