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## Seminar Serbia-Way into the Future

Belgrade (Serbia), 17.01.2014

Precisely at the moment at which the country of Serbia is starting accession negotiations with the European Union, the present seminar was organised, during which the speakers together with the participants discussed the country's situation at social level, as regards social dialogue but also as regards workers' rights and social security regulations and expressed hope that, through negotiations, the standard of living of the Serbian people would improve, more means would be made available for social expenses and the democratic organisation of social partnership in Serbia would be realised.

Njegoš Potežica, President of SDSS (Trade Union of the Public Administration of Serbia) opened the seminar. He underlined the importance of social dialogue as the best mechanism to realise social interests and stated that discharging social partners from their duties is extremely important for the functioning of social dialogue.



*Dragana Dorđević, President of the Trade Union of Culture of Serbia  
Slađanka Milošević, President of the Trade Union of Judiciary Employees of Serbia  
Njegoš Potežica, President of SDSS (Trade Union of the Public Administration of Serbia)*

The Ministry of Justice and Public Administration was represented by PhD Nedjo Jovanovic, State Secretary.

Fritz Neugebauer, President of Eurofedop, was excused. Until late at night, he had been negotiating with the Government of Austria about a new collective agreement for his country's Civil Service (negotiations concluded successfully).

Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General of Eurofedop, spoke about practical matters regarding Serbia's accession to the European Union. He made it clear that the European Union has laid down strict negotiation regulations for a country to join the EU and summed up various domains in which, according to the European Commission in its annual progress report on Serbia for 2013, this country still has to implement reforms.

Prof. PhD Branko Lubarda of the Faculty of Law of the University of Belgrade dealt with the seminar's theme from a scientific point of view.



*From in front middle to right: Gottfried Zehetleitner, Member of the Board of Telekom Austria  
Bert Van Caelenberg, Secretary General Eurofedop*

Gottfried Zehetleitner, Member of the Board of Telekom Austria, gave very interesting, direct examples of the way in which the working time is regulated at national and European level.

Jelena Kovacić-Kostic, responsible for Human Resources in the Tax Administration of Serbia, spoke about the important role which the State has to play as promoter and organiser of social dialogue. When social dialogue functions well, it is possible to solve social problems, favour social stability and stimulate economic growth. She declared that she has been able to learn a lot from conferences such as the present one for her daily work.

Bojana Bijelović Bosanac, President of the Youth Section of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia (CATUS), spoke about the role of young people in social dialogue in the future. At present, the youth in Serbia have practically no voice in consultation mechanisms although they represent 20 % of the population. Moreover, she regretted that even trade unions are not giving sufficient attention to the interests

of the young. In 2014, the Youth Council of Serbia (founded in 2011) plans to launch a structural dialogue with decision mechanisms in Serbia for the discussion of various subjects which concern the young.

Boris Pleša, representing the Trade Union of State and Local Government Employees of the Republic of Croatia, gave examples of how negotiations prior to his country's accession to the EU took place with a view to implementing the *acquis communautaire*.

Professor Darko Marinković of Magatrend University stated that, as regards social relations in a time of economic crisis, all players have to take their responsibility. The irresponsible attitude of trade unions which fight against necessary changes may well turn against them. He made an appeal to join forces for reaching a social consensus to find a way out of the crisis, because this is the only way to be successful.

Slađanka Milošević, President of the Trade Union of Judiciary Employees of Serbia, spoke about trade unions and the media. Although her trade union regularly invites journalists to speak about important trade union subjects, those journalists don't write about these subjects, only strikes and protest rallies are reported in the media. Nevertheless, it is important for trade unions to get a voice in the media to inform the public about trade union activities, funding, social dialogue, collective negotiations, etc.

Dragana Dorđević, President of the Trade Union of Culture of Serbia, made an appeal for organising a national demonstration on 23 February.

At the end of the seminar, all participants, from Serbia as well as other countries from South Eastern Europe, joined in a debate about experiences regarding social dialogue in their home country.