

**Working Group 5 Meeting
and Capacity Building Conference, co-organized by Solidariumas Trade Union**

**Annual Meeting Report
18 June 2015, Vilnius**

The EaP CSF Working Group 5 on social and labour policies and social dialogue convened for its meeting in Vilnius on 18 June. Some 12 participants from trade unions, think tanks, NGOs from the EaP countries and EU and, as well as the officials from the Lithuanian ministry of Social Affairs and Labour took part in the meeting. The meeting was chaired by Daiva Kvedaraitė (Lithuanian Trade Union Solidarumas). In her opening speech, **Kristina Krupavičienė** (President of Lithuanian Trade Union Solidarumas) presented Lithuanian experience in developing the new social model.

1. Updates and Actions of National Platforms and from regional activities targeting welfare or labour policies reform

“WG5 should not only be about trade unions but also voluntary organisations” - Nicolae Procopie -

“We are observing the establishment of many GONGOs and people from the old regimes attempt to re-enter into positions using European norms. There is a need for European arbiters in the social dialogue” - Vyacheslav Roi

“There is a gradual retraction of labour rights in Belarus” - Siarhei Antusevich –

The chair of this session **Siarhei Antusevich** (Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions) asked the participants to review the latest developments in their countries.

UKRAINE: **Rostislav Dzundza** (Bureau of Social and Political Developments, Ukraine) talked about the research project, which analyses how the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine influence social dialogue in the country. **Vyacheslav Roi** (Federation of Trade Unions of Small and Medium Enterprise of Ukraine) greeted the fact, that for the first time in six years the Prime Minister has met with labour unions and employers. In Ukraine, the problem in social dialogue is not between labour unions and employers, but inter-labour and inter-employer disputes. Another problem for trade unions is that the normative threshold for trade unions to be included in national wide social dialogue is a membership of 150 000. From 21 organisations, only six satisfy this requirement. Mr. Roi also complained of the establishment of many GONGOs and people from the old regimes attempt to re-enter into positions using European norms. There is a need for European arbiters in the social dialogue.

AZERBAIJAN: **Sahib Mammadov** (Citizens' Labour Rights Protection League, Azerbaijan) said that all labour contracts in Azerbaijan are to be registered online. Though it does give some extra social guarantees, it will not eliminate the shadow economy and there are many difficulties in registering the contract online. In addition, there is no law on association of employers in Azerbaijan. **Agil Dadashov** (Azerbaijan Trade Unions Confederation) said, that long talks on creating a permanently functioning trilateral commission on social dialogue are ongoing and it is likely for it to start functioning in September.

GEORGIA: **Lasha Bliadze** (Georgian Trade Unions Confederation) told that although branch organisation of the national platform start to appear; there are no participants from business. The main problems in Georgia is that the labour inspection has been invalid since 2006 and that there is a need to recreate the mediation system.

MOLDOVA: **Viorica Antonov** (Institute for Development and Social Initiative “Viitorul”, Moldova) discussed the new Labour Code that is under consideration in the Moldovan Parliament. It has more than 40 amendments, gives more rights to employers and less to employees rights and trade unions. **Nicolae Procopie** (National Platform) told that last year they had a big discussion on voluntary labour with the ILO and gathered statistics on voluntary work. The aim is to have well-developed social capital and to define standards for voluntary work. He also stressed that the WG5 should not only be about trade unions but also voluntary organisations. The vision should be a more professional and united labour force.

BELARUS: **Siarhei Antusevich** noted that the interest of the EU towards those EaP countries that did not sign AA diminished and saw a thaw in relations between EU and Belarus. There is a gradual retraction of labour rights in Belarus. For instance the Presidential Decree No. 5. Now it is only necessary to warn 7 days in advance about dismissal from work, earlier a month was necessary. Decree no.3 declares that all those that do not work more than 183 days per year have to pay 200\$. Out of 12 ILO recommendations for Belarus, only four have been realized. There are difficulties in registering independent trade unions and many that have been are very loyal to the president.

2. Thematic panels: reform of social protection and building the foundations of a strong social dialogue

“Civil society has become a powerful and active player; there is also a danger that a parallel vertical NGO system will be developed in Ukraine.” - Rostyslav Dundza –

“The best way to tackle shadow salaries is to digitalize as many money transfers as possible” – Audra Mikalauskaitė -

Opening this session **Rostyslav Dundza** presented his organisation’s achievements in promoting social dialogue in Ukraine. They managed to put at the table all major players, such as the notorious oligarch Firtash. Dundza noted that civil society has become a powerful and active player, but there is also a danger that a parallel vertical NGO system will develops in Ukraine.

Audra Mikalauskaitė (Former Vice-minister of Social Affairs and Labour, lecturer at the University of Mykolas Romeris) delivered the presentation [“Status and prospects of social dialogue in Lithuania after EU accession”](#). The presenter focused on the creation process of this model. The main push to review Lithuania’s social model were demographic changes: Lithuania’s population is ageing and the country is affected by intra-EU migration. Each generation has its own perspective: youth cannot find work without work experience, pensioners are not satisfied with their benefits, and as a result, the middle generation is squeezed to look after themselves, their future, and the current pensioners. Ms Mikalauskaitė also discussed the link between work time paid and work contracts.

The participants of the meeting were interested in whether fixed-term contracts would become a cover for non-fixed term contracts and in Lithuania's experience how to tackle shadow economy and shadow salaries. Many of the participants said that people in their countries are interested in getting minimal wage and receive the rest in the form of unreported employment. They faced a challenge in making them become interested in paying taxes and as a result receive their social guarantees. To that, **Audra Mikalauskaitė** responded that the best way to do so is to digitalize as many money transfers as possible: salary payments, payments for goods and services, after a certain price threshold was reached.

Naira Arakelyan presented integrated social services reforms in Armenia and how they are experienced by the beneficiaries as well as its organisation's latest plans for research. **Viorica Antonov** gave the presentation "welfare reforms undertaken by Moldova under the AA agreement, strengths and weaknesses" sharing the results of two research projects: one on working opportunities for disabled people and the other on introducing young people into the workforce.

Links to the presentations

http://eap-csf.eu/assets/images/2015_04_socialinis_dialogas_LT_EN_-_PRESENTATION_SLIDES.pdf

http://eap-csf.eu/assets/images/2015_Socialinis_modelis_pristatymas_patikslintas_PRESENTATION_SLIDES2.pdf

Link to the agenda

http://eap-csf.eu/assets/images/Working_Group_5_draft_agenda.pdf

Link to the list of participants

http://eap-csf.eu/assets/images/WG5_List_of_participants.pdf