

Enhancing communication strategies of workers' organizations

"Strengthening social dialogue – shaping European integration": special project for workers' organizations in the Western Balkans" - "Enhancing communication strategies of workers' organizations";

Focused seminar in the framework of special projects for workers' organizations in the Western Balkans 2018

Budapest, 12-13 April 2018.

MOSZ and TUC Nezavisnost held a common Seminar with the title of „Efficient communication strategies for Trade Unions” in the framework of EZA special project for workers' organizations in the Western Balkans.

The Seminar was organized in Budapest in the historical Gellért hotel. Given the great number of applicants we counted fifty participants from: Polish, Bulgarian, Hungarian, Czech, Serbian, Slovakian trade unions.

Imre Palkovics, the president of the National Confederation of Workers' Councils, the member of the EZA Board welcomed the participants and stressed: during many Western-Balkan projects the difficulties of communication of the organizations as well as the challenges implied by the modern communication solutions have been discussed many times. This time we are looking for these solutions. On the Seminar we have asked for support of well-known professionals in political communication and the private sector communication to get answer for the challenges concerning the communication of the modern age from a trade union perspective. Imre Palkovics has expressed his gratitude to EZA for the possibility to organize the Seminar.

In his opening speech **Dragan Milanovic, the vice-president of TUC Nezavisnost** has stressed his appreciation on organizing this Seminar in the framework of EZA Western Balkan projects and have expressed his hope on an exchange of experience and assistance among the present trade union members for the amelioration of communication strategies and further expand of the bilateral agreements besides the professional support of the speakers.

Flóra Idrányi, chief of communication at the National Confederation of Workers' Councils in her presentation she stressed: the organizations similar to the private sector and political players should use the PR toolkit of the 21st century. In this respect the Eastern-European region and the Western-Balkan show great deficits compared to the Western-European countries: trade unions should use a two-way symmetrical PR model which is **"conflict management"** in itself, where communication appears as a management tool for the resolution of conflicts. The aim is the harmonization, fitting in and survival. The institutional communication should not simply be used as a reactive action but as a **planning and forecasting tool of the management. The goal is to stop or resolve conflicts, the harmonization to the environment in order to reach consensus.**

Dragan Milanovic, the vice-president of TUC Nezavisnost held a presentation on "Digital existence". The vice-president said, that he is in a relative easy situation, since within TUC Nezavisnost he is the head of the media division. They proudly share that in the last years they are present on Facebook, Twitter and Youtube and have recently made a video clip on collective agreements. At the end of his presentation he distributed medicaments and washing powder labeled with TUC Nezavisnost, which of course didn't include drugs but useful advice for trade union members.

Gergő Süveges the reporter of the Hungarian Radio held his

presentation on how to prepare to different report situations and how to react to unexpected reporter's questions.

József Perlaky-Papp crisis communication advisor in his presentation stressed that the trade union communication is basically a continuous crisis communications since for instance declaring a strike is declaring the crisis itself. The publicity serves the purpose to initiate dialogue in the conflict. From a communication point of view strike is considered to be a "soft crisis" since it does not require eg. human life. **Perlaky showed: trade unions can take an important communication role in the upcoming years, since the great problem of emigration of labor will determine the common talk.**

Andrea Szabó senior lecturer Ph.D, professor of the Political Institute talked about the importance of announcements. As she said, two-way symmetric communication model cannot be executed without announcements. For our question she said, that we are looking an answer for the simple question what people expect from trade unions, she offered a telephone-based representative survey.

Árpád Papp-Vári, Ph.D head of the Institute of Marketing Budapest Metropolitan University, vice-president of the Hungarian Marketing Association was trying to unfold the technique of brand building of trade unions. He said: the post-communist countries are in a difficult situation by means of trade union brand building since they have to **reposition an already established, negative brand**. For an example he has presented an advertisement of Skoda, where the parking guard was trying to scratch down the Skoda logo from the car.

Zsolt Gombos online marketing trainer was explaining how a good trade union website should look like and how we can do crowd building for trade unions on the web. **He stated "we have to build communities, since the future and the power are in communication"**. He showed a concrete example on how to aim workers abroad via Facebook.

In her closing speech **Erzsébet Tóth-Báthori the vice-president of APV regional committee** showed the ideas elaborated in the framework of the Agreement between the National Confederation of Workers' Councils and TUC Nezavisnost. She highlighted: years before the bilateral agreement made in the framework of Western-Balkan projects with MOSZ has showed on several fields its results. The two organizations are in a constant dialogue and pay attention to each other's activities and media appearances. She stressed the second weekly appearing 30-minute broadcast of MOSZ called "The World of Workers" from which they have gained a lot of ideas in Serbia.

Taking the two-day experience into account in the working groups the representatives of the different countries were unfolding their personal problems and successes as regard to communication:

From **Romania Darle Vasile** member of NATUC Cartel Alfa said: he is here on behalf of the trade union of policemen of Romania. The organization includes around 9000 members. They have established a website and a Facebook page which are operated by an administrator. They receive a lot of questions via Facebook, which they either answer there or have the possibility to answer them on a television stream once a week between 18.00 and 19.00. The programs for the television show are put together based on questions received online.

Josef Mozolewski from Solidarnosc Poland said: they are proud to be a member of Solidarnosc. The Solidarnosc itself is such a brand, which identifies their trade union being. The organization was established in 1990 and has significantly contributed to the changes in history. He joined the at that time illegal organization in 1989, at present he is the president of the North-West region, he is vice-president of EZA, he works at the education platform of EZA.

He thinks that mobilization of people is a standard problem. Despite that Solidarnosc is trying to use modern tools on this

field, these are at this point limited: not every member can reach the online platforms. The younger generation is hard to target, aging is a general problem, members age above 50 years are in great number, there is need for further development. Besides **recruitment** Josef Mozolewski assigned the **protection of workers** as the most important job of trade unions.

Vladislav Jevtovic from Serbia, president of SS B0F0S in the banking sector explained, that their bank was recently acquired by the Hungarian OTP bank. In the recent years the trade union has established a network against **mobbing** and for the support of remedies. He recalled that Dragan Milanovic was talking about brand, which they as well think to be important. Today we can say that their organization is visible but in order to make it visible for young people one has to be present in the media. Dragan Milanovic added: if there is no internet, our operations do not work, therefore we are dependent. He has just returned from China, where there is no Google. This is today unimaginable for us. **Difficult questions are arising with the revolution 4.0.**

Dejan Zivkovic representing the health care sector of Nezavisnost explained that he had a great use of the Seminar especially of in **marketing and online communication**. **Pavel Matousek from the Czech Republic** said that the economic environment is becoming stronger. The government recognized that education is the most important therefore they are executing a bill of a 150% wage increase for teachers. Teachers earn at the moment 1200 Euro. **The lack of labor means an extreme problem. They are trying to solve the problem with Serbian and Rumanian work force.** They maintain great contact with colleagues from Slovenian and Slovakian trade unions. He sees the biggest burden in communication that the media is not interested in trade union communication.

Finally **each of the head of the participating trade unions revealed how migration of labor and the difficulties of the free movement of labor affect them.** They are trying to face

this problem from different aspects in Hungary, Poland, Romania, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Slovenia and Serbia as well. It would be useful if trade unions could further discuss the problem within other Seminars supported by EZA and would look at other cooperation possibilities for supporting each other. **The idea of establishing a common cross-border communication strategy for the resolution of problems arising due to the free movement of labor has emerged.**

Budapest, 23.04.2018.

Flóra Idrányi