

On September 18-19, 2014, EZA organised a two-day seminar

On September 18-19, 2014, EZA organised a two-day seminar in cooperation with MOSZ (National Federation of Workers' Councils), at Rubin Hotel Budapest, titled "Strategies for Workers' Organisations to Design Employment and Social Policy with European Funding Possibilities".

Imre Palkovics, President of MOSZ, Nándor Csepreghy, Deputy State Secretary responsible for the Communication of Development Policy, and Roswitha Gottbehüt, Secretary General of EZA, participated in the press conference.

The seminar was attended by delegates from 22 countries who shared the experiences of their respective countries with each other.

In her welcoming address, Roswitha Gottbehüt, Secretary General of EZA, highlighted the importance of a social dialogue between the stakeholders of the labour market – employers' representatives, employee's representatives and the government – as equal partners. She pointed out that social dialogue and the involvement of trade unions in the decision-making process will also remain of vital importance in the future.

Nándor Csepreghy, representing the Hungarian government, drew attention to the fact that the government will invest 60% of the 34.5 billion Euros that Hungary will receive until 2020 in economic development to the creation of new jobs. Even though each member-state of the European Union faces different circumstances, they all have to tackle similar problems. One of the most important of these challenges is the creation of workplaces that are sustainable on the long term, added the deputy state secretary. He went on to inform that the most

important target defined by the European Commission in the EU 2020 Strategy is to achieve an employment rate of 75% among the 20-64 year-old population. Hungary has endorsed this target and has announced another program with a similar goal already in 2010 that aims to create 1 million new workplaces within 10 years.

During the two-day workshop, the participants came to the following conclusions:

The Budapest Workshop recommendations to promote the partnership principle in the use of European Social Fund resources

Social partners should be managed as key partners in the area of employment related ESF spending decisions, like job creation, labor market training, workers mobility, occupational health and safety, rehabilitation of disadvantaged employee groups.

The participation of trade unions in decisions about the spending of ESF is not a gift, but a right based on tax payments performed by employees to the budget of the European Union.

Key partnership in the field of using the ESF resources means:

1. The involvement of social partners through the whole procedure of decision making: defining operative programmes, actions plans, tender schemes, making project selection, doing implementation monitoring.
2. The involvement of social partners at an early stage, to be able to influence each step of the above mentioned process,
3. Possibility of living (personal) dialogue, on meetings organized specifically for the social partners.
4. The obligation of written feedback for each comment and

- proposal of the social partners,
5. Providing ESF resources without co-financing obligation to train workers representatives in order to fulfill the partnership function ,
 6. The extension the practice of transferring funds to tripartite bodies of social partners for implementing agreed projects in the field of employment related services,
 7. Not excluding from consultations the registered social partners being under the locally defined representation conditions.

The transfer of funds to social partners for the purposes of capacity building must be a public, transparent procedure designed with the common agreement of social partners. The monitoring activity over ESF spending should include the valuation of the implementation of the code of conduct rules. The monitoring report has to reflect the opinion of the social partners about the realization of these rules. Social partners are encouraged to be active in monitoring committees, in evaluating the preparation, the selection procedure and the implementation of projects financed from ESF. The internal rules of monitoring committees should support the activity of social partners with regular valuation reports prepared by independent experts and institutions.

The EU Commission should review regularly – at least yearly – the national monitoring reports about the realization of the code of conduct rules and to act efficiently in case of breaching the rules.

Workshop recommendations about the participation of trade unions in the utilization of the ESF resources

Trade unions are encouraged to apply for funds to finance employment related services going beyond the traditional

interest representation activities, like job mediation, labor market training, mentoring, counseling in occupational health and safety issues, etc. Trade unions are encouraged to form partnerships with other civil organisations to develop and implement such projects.

Trade unions are advised to increase their capacities and abilities in preparing projects, in project management, in financial planning and reporting.

The role of EZA in supporting the members to have a better access of ESF financing

- Training on project development, preparation of applications, project management, financial planning, partnership management.
- Developing a database of national projects financed by ESF and managed by the member organisations.
- Organizing seminars to present the most successful national projects.
- Organizing seminars to exchange experience about national projects with similar topics.

The role of EZA in supporting the members to have an access to additional EU funding

Initiate, or coordinate transnational project development proposals. Preliminary ideas:

- coordinated trade union services for migrant workers
- developing a transnational labor market training data base
- developing analytical tools to support social dialogue
- facilitating the employment of older workers

- developing occupational safety and health risk management tools.

Initiate, or coordinate transnational project development proposals targeting Interreg resources.

Adrianna Soós, employment policy expert at the National Federation of Workers' Councils, presented a successfully implemented project called „Goodtraining“, a service that is available on the website of the Federation. The project provides a complex virtual system that directly connects employees and unemployed persons looking for training with the institutions providing training, as well as with the employment centre.

Imre Palkovics, President of MOSZ, highlighted that EZA and MOSZ have been cooperating for a long time. He further pointed out that the way the funds of the new budget cycle are used in order to create employment and to enhance the quality of life of employees is a very important question for employees and trade unions. It is essential that trade unions, being the representatives of the affected strata of employees, can participate in the programming, tendering and goal-setting for the respective funds within the national framework.