



International Trade Union Confederation

GENERAL COUNCIL

Brussels, Belgium, 29 November – 1 December 2017

Agenda item 14:

The Regions

(e) PERC

The General Council is requested to approve the report of PERC.



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International Trade Union confederation
Confédération syndicale internationale
Confederación Sindical Internacional
Internationaler Gewerkschaftsbund

ITUC Frontlines and Priorities

Region: PERC

Highlights

The economic recovery in Europe has not led to improvement of the well-being of workers. Despite the highest economic growth after the financial and economic crisis and reported decreasing unemployment, wages are still stagnating and jobs created are often precarious. Zero-hour contracts, part-time work, forced self-employment and Uber-style work are spreading. Technological developments bring further challenges of reduction of traditional industries, changes of the nature of working relations and the use of big data.

Peace, democracy, human rights and fundamental freedoms are under attack in many European countries. Mass inequalities, precariousness, and the inability of governments to handle migration processes properly are leading to a rise of populist and ultra-right political forces that are exploiting the despair and anger of citizens and their frustration and loss of trust in traditional political parties, including social democratic parties, as elections in Austria, the Netherlands, Czech Republic, France and Germany demonstrated. Conflict in Eastern Ukraine is at best smouldering. Security concerns, in a view of omnipresent risks of terrorism, are leading to increased military spending at the expense of education, public services and state investments, and are being used to justify limitations on freedoms and to drive revision of migration policies.

Labour and social laws are under attack, particularly through IMF pressure along with the finance lobby and the American Chamber of Commerce. Massive mobilisation against the TTIP in the EU and US was able to freeze the moves to advance investors' interests over those of workers and citizens and to undermine state regulations through dispute mechanisms or investment courts, but that is seen more as an exception. Reforms directed to decentralisation of collective bargaining implemented under neo-liberal crisis management led to irreversible harm and decrease of collective bargaining coverage as well as wage stagnation.

More and more voices have been joining trade union messages on the need to increase wages, install more fair taxation and promote collective bargaining to reduce inequalities. The European Union developed its Pillar of Social Rights, which at least recognises that a social dimension is necessary for a united Europe. It is yet to be seen how seriously and quickly the Pillar, which foresees *improved parental and carers' leave, more security at work and better working conditions and access to social protection*, will be embraced in law and practice. The ETUC and ITUC "Europe Needs a Pay Rise" campaigns got solid support in academic circles, media and social networks. Particular attention is put on the East-West wage gap that is promoted by multinational enterprises in their production and supply chains. East-West wage convergence is supported by several EU governments.

Meanwhile, in several countries the governments push for reforms that would further impoverish the most vulnerable and undermine public services. These include healthcare reform in Ukraine, social security reforms in Romania, and once again more changes in Greece. Trade unionists are dismissed, harassed and imprisoned in many European countries, with Turkey, Kazakhstan, Ukraine, Belarus and Greece

getting the worst scores in the ITUC Trade Union rights index. Workers are stripped of protection under the guise of creating a more investment friendly environment, and labour inspectorates are losing their mandates and scope of actions in several Eastern European countries. The right to strike is challenged, and police intervened to suppress industrial actions in Kazakhstan and Georgia. Trafficking for forced labour risks are growing, including in the European Union.

In Turkey the President rules by executive decrees and martial law, with more than 120,000 workers arbitrarily dismissed, thousands arrested and business closed. Following discussion at the PERC Executive Committee and based on outcomes of the high-level ITUC-ETUC mission to Turkey, the two general secretaries recommended that affiliates not attend the European Regional Meeting and not be associated with any conclusions of this Conference. This call was respected by affiliates.

Frontlines - 2017

Climate Justice and Industrial Transformation

- NIS and SEE OSH networks started climate justice and industrial transformation discussions; however, this is yet to become a topical issue for the broader European region. Several organisations from oil and gas rich countries signalled interest. EXPO-2017 in Astana on renewable energies could have been a good occasion to advance the dialogue in the region; however, brutal repressions by the government against trade unions prevented them from taking part in different discussion platforms.
- The joint mission of the ITUC and IndustriAll to Ukraine concluded that the coal and energy industry does not provide a perspective for economic development, nor is there evidence of reforms that support workers in the industrial sectors. Trade unions are not treated as real social partners.
- Discussions on the Future of Work and Sustainable Development Goals open opportunities for unions to bring Just Transition and the need for social dialogue in building a future that leaves no one behind.

Taming Corporate Power in Supply Chains

- Consultations with GUFs continued and some joint actions were taken (e.g., facilitation of conflict resolution at Draxmaier in Romania with IndustriAll, healthcare workshop for Ukraine with EPSU, etc.).
- The PERC Executive discussed positive practices and developments that improve compliance with core labour standards in MNE supply chains (French legislation, OECD guidelines, EIB due diligence process, Bulgarian project, etc.).
- A joint action with the ETUC “Europe Needs A Pay Rise” had strong support of unionists from Central and Eastern Europe and highlighted wage discrimination between Eastern and Western subsidiaries of the same MNEs.
- The annual PERC summer school “Fair Wages: Closing Tax, Social and Pay Gaps” took place in Rönneberga, Sweden, on 18-20 September 2017. Some 70 participants debated trade union policies and actions to achieve decent wages in their countries. A special session on the Global Deal initiative, launched by the Swedish government, was debated in a view of changing the dominant liberal economic model discourse towards the one that is built on dialogue, decent work and inclusive growth.
- A workshop on reducing the informal economy was organised jointly with ACTRAV for Montenegro unions, with participation of experts from SEE countries.

Eliminating Slavery

- An ITUC mission to Uzbekistan and its recommendations to trade unions in the country would hopefully contribute to decreasing the risks of forced labour and exploitation in the country. A plan of work was designed by the Federation of Trade Unions to address workers' rights violations.
- Support for ITUC actions on Forced Labour Protocol ratification.
- Monitoring FIFA 2018 World Cup developments following a successful campaign to stop labour law exemptions in the construction sector in Russia.
- Preparation of a CAS case on Poland over forced labour (C29). While the case focused on North Korean workers in the country, it also prompted discussion about exploitation of migrants from Ukraine and emergence of trafficking networks in Poland and Lithuania.

Priorities - 2017

Countries At Risk

- This year, five countries from Europe were listed in the worst category of the ITUC Index: Belarus, Kazakhstan, Greece, Turkey and Ukraine. PERC supports affiliates in these countries by developing ITUC statements, jointly with the ETUC/TUAC approaching EU institutions and OECD, promoting press action and launching specific campaigns (as with Kazakhstan and Belarus).
- Observers went to trials of Larisa Kharkova, CNTUK President. The organisation itself was stripped of its registration, its leaders jailed and prosecuted. A complaint to the Committee on Freedom of Association was submitted about systematic violations in Kazakhstan.
- ITUC-ETUC missions to Turkey, jointly with Turkish affiliates, issued a statement that called for the respect and full enforcement of trade union rights in Turkey, including freedom of association, the right to strike and collective bargaining, and developed clear demands to the Turkish government in that regard.
- PERC regular pre-ILC meeting on potential priority cases from the region for the ILC-CAS and other ILC-related processes and preparation of national cases with affiliates for the (CAS). PERC coordinated five cases for the Committee on Application of Standards (Poland, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Turkey and UK (jointly with ETUC)).
- The PERC organised ITUC missions to Kazakhstan and to Uzbekistan to promote workers' rights in these countries and a joint mission with IndustriAll to Ukraine was facilitated.
- Solidarity and protest actions on trade union rights violations, in particular Kazakhstan, Belarus, Turkey, Georgia, Romania and Ukraine.
- Assistance to affiliates on labour law reforms, utilisation of the international mechanisms of workers' rights protection (ILO, IFIs, Council of Europe, EU dimension).
- Expertise and organisational support for affiliates in Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine in the implementation of the Annexes of the social chapters in the AA/DCFTA agreements.
- Legal and political advice on cases and demands from members around legal frameworks and labour relations systems that often ignore social dialogue and are accompanied by targeted anti-union media campaigns (in close cooperation with ITUC HTUR, Legal and CamCom Departments): Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Macedonia, Uzbekistan, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Moldova, Georgia, Montenegro, etc.
- Meetings of legal experts from NIS on utilisation of the ILO jurisprudence in national legal contexts. **SEE legal experts' participation in the ETUC Netlex meeting was facilitated.** The next meeting can include participation of the experts from Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- The PERC is part of the ITUC dialogue with the European Investment Bank on due diligence and labour rights screening of the projects outside the EU.
- Contribution to the ITUC HTUR survey continued.

Global Coherence and Development

- The PERC jointly with the ETUC follows the civil society platforms and domestic advisory groups the Association and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.
- PERC takes part in Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum's Annual assembly. Goda Neverauskaite was elected as working group 5 "Social & Labour Policies and Social Dialogue" coordinator for 2017 and 2018.
- PERC contributed to the civil society input to the UNICE discussion of the Sustainable Development Goals implementation. It also provides input to the European Development Policies Forum and ILO future of work initiative processes via regional consultations and conferences (Bulgaria, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Azerbaijan).
- Assistance to the CNSM Moldova on pension reform process (with the FES) and to the Ukrainian affiliates on healthcare reforms (jointly with EPSU) was provided.

Global Governance of Migration

- The PERC Executive Committee finalised a resolution on migration, which was submitted to the global ITUC preparatory meeting for the discussion at the International Labour Conference.
- Exchange of practices on integration and protection of migrant workers continued, by facilitating bilateral meetings and participating in specific activities and supporting MigrantNet.

Count Us In!

- The Count Us In! campaign was signed by 22 European organisations and the number is increasing.
- The average women's membership rate in the PERC region is 51.16 per cent as stated in the ITUC Gender Equality Survey 2017; six PERC organisations saw an increase in women membership rates (CGSLB Belgium; CFDT France; ASI Iceland; TCO Sweden; CCOO Spain and HAK-IS Turkey).
 - Recently good progress has been made with increasing the number of women in top leadership positions: 30.3 per cent of elected top-leadership positions are women. BSPSH, Albania: achieved 35 per cent women in leadership and set a new target for 2018 of 40 per cent.
 - CNSM Moldova: achieved 37 per cent women in decision-making positions (General Council); after their Congress they increased women in leadership positions at the confederal level.
 - GTUC, Georgia: achieved 30 per cent and after the congress have 50 per cent representation of women in top leadership.
 - LIGA Hungary: achieved 30 per cent representation of women in top positions and is one of PERC organisations with a woman President.
 - FNPR Russia has a high representation of women at regional level: trade union councils (55 per cent), Presidium (50 per cent), Executive Committees (45 per cent). FNPR has 30 per cent women representation at top leadership level.
- Labour reforms as part of the Count Us In! campaign took place in Moldova; social protection and child care benefits (Moldova, Georgia); pension reforms in Moldova and Georgia; informal economy in Central Asian countries.
- Awareness and capacity building programs for women and men on gender equality have been developed in Moldova, FNPR Russia, KTR Russia, GTUC Georgia with an accent on organising young women.
- A care economy campaign started in GTUC Georgia focused on the urgent need for child care and elderly care facilities; this campaign will start next year in other PERC organisations.
- Fighting violence against women and men at the workplace: a regional conference was organised in Budapest where lobbying for an ILO Convention and recommendation was discussed; KTR

Russia, BSPSH Albania, CNSM Moldova, GTUC Georgia have recently organised national meetings where national action plans were initiated.

Organising

- A PERC youth organising academy meeting in Zagreb focused on young organisers and implementation of the individual workplans was assessed.
- Youth promoting activities were implemented in Montenegro, Ukraine, Albania, Ukraine and Armenia. Contribution to national youth actions of the affiliates.
- Global Organising Academy support to organising commerce sector in Georgia was facilitated.
- Support to national actions of affiliates to mobilise and outreach young workers.
- The communication network highlighted organising.

Other Regional Issues

The 2016-17 PERC Activity Programme of PERC was successfully implemented with more than 20 regional and sub-regional activities and some 20 national level actions in SEE and NIS regions. The 2017-2018 work plan adopted by the Executive Committee is on track.

The PERC programme includes Europe-level activities and promotion of different networks in sub-regions of SEE and NIS. Statutory activities (General Assembly, Executive Committee and Women and Youth Committees) are supplemented by discussion fora where all affiliates can take part (PERC Summer School, Organising Academy, PERC pre-ILC meeting and other thematic meetings). The PERC elected leadership team meets regularly to receive an update on the PERC agenda and planning.

The PERC Women's and Youth Committees have their own agendas, and in addition to regular meetings, they facilitated specific actions in the field, e.g., facilitating youth and gender activities in the region, also in cooperation with the ITUC Equality Department and the ILO (Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Croatia, Ukraine, Poland). The challenge of balanced participation of East and West in the Youth Committee has to be addressed.

Regular sub-regional meetings of trade union specialists are maintained with the support of the Union to Union and ACTRAV. Economists' networks focused on wage policies, legal experts in NIS on utilisation of the international jurisprudence in national court system contexts, and the communication officers' network on promoting trade union campaigns and using modern technologies in union work. Regular regional meetings of NIS and SEE OSH policy networks took place with the ETUI on OSH prevention policies.

Special assistance was provided to the organisations in critical and hostile environments through solidarity fund assistance, e.g., BKDP-Belarus, CNTUK-Kazakhstan, Turk-SEN-Cyprus. A special fund was installed by ITUC and ETUC to provide legal assistance to unions in Turkey.

The PERC website is functioning and information is updated regularly; however, the move to a new platform is delayed. Assistance of the ITUC and ETUC communication teams is ensured and there is ongoing cooperation with the ITUC Campaigns and Communications department and Equal Times on articles from the PERC region. Regular communication to the PERC mailing list continued with information about activities, important events, trainings or announcements, inquiries and materials of general interest.

The team is in contact with GUFs/EIFs, ETUC and ITUC officers, ETUI, TUAC, ILO-ACTRAV specialists in the region, affiliates and partners, as well as relevant EU Institutions and other organisations on different issues of the PERC programme.

The PERC regional offices in Moscow and Sarajevo have maintained successful cooperation in implementing joint projects in their areas with ILO ACTRAV, FES, and Union to Union. They regularly update about activities and developments in the regions on the PERC website and have been translating and distributing relevant information for trade union policy development to build policy-making capacity.

They have been actively supporting ITUC initiatives, regional PERC activities as well as implementing their own on particular issues and country/organisation-specific demands.

Traditionally good cooperation with several SSOs – ILO ACTRAV, FES, Union to Union (LO, TCO and SACO, Sweden) and affiliates offering to host regional events or to support office structure in kind (e.g., FNPR, AHIK, LO-Sweden) contributed to programme implementation. However, the limitation of the project funding to the DAC list or priority countries made involvement of unionists from certain countries problematic. Unfortunately, attempts to access EU development funding for specific national actions were not successful.

The interaction with ILO ACTRAV is even more direct and continuous over the annual cycle through joint planning and implementation of activities. The level of cooperation and synergy with the work of the ILO ACTRAV Moscow has been remarkably successful, and the same approach was institutionalised with the ILO ACTRAV Budapest. Cooperation with local offices of the FES, on practical activities or on analysis about national social, labour or political developments, is appreciated.

PERC activities are closely coordinated with and supported by the ETUC and the ETUI in terms of professional expertise and political weight in addressing concerns of the PERC affiliates and taking part in EU-related processes. Regular exchange and contribution from GUFs/EIFs and TUAC for experts and leaders of Eastern PERC affiliates is facilitated. Coordination and contacts with different trade union networks continued to be a priority (e.g., BASTUN, CEETYN, ECTUN, Solidarity, etc.).
