



# NEWS

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR WORKERS' QUESTIONS • NO. 1 / 2010

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26 young trade union leaders and managers of workers organisations from Portugal, Spain, Romania, Poland and Italy attended the course, that was certified by Portugal's ISCET Institute

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## EDITORIAL



*Dear Friends,*

*Strategies were originally developed to win wars. It is a military expression. Today, every enterprise acts according to "its" strategy – also including the "Enterprise EU", to which we all belong.*

*The recently adopted Lisbon Strategy saw little success. It simply took too long in the early phases to put the necessary national reforms strategically into effect. It is now being followed by the ambitious EU 2020 strategy – with long-term objectives in a short-lived era. Keeping an eye on the long-term perspective and reviewing it in individ-*

*ual stages is a proven strategy and surely a suitable approach to achieving sustainable progress in employment, research and innovation, climate protection and energy, education and poverty reduction, while creating a greater awareness of coherence. From the point of view of EZA – well practiced in coherence for 25 years – may we remark that training is of great significance both in its own right and as a major component of all named objectives in the EU 2020 strategy.*

*As the training network for workers organizations, EZA will be paying special attention to ensuring that the advantages of Europe's unique social model are upheld and further expanded by the EU 2020 strategy. After all, it offers many opportunities to continue our dialogue on a high standard of quality.*

*Yours,  
Roswitha Gottbehüt  
Secretary General*

## Jubilee year 2010: EZA celebrates its 25th birthday

It all began in Brussels on 29 January 1985. The intention of EZA's founders was to provide workers training on a Christian-social basis. To this end, ten workers organizations from Belgium, Germany, Luxemburg, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, France and Ireland all came together.

Initially a whole set of difficulties had to be overcome. The modest start capital of DM 24,000 (approx. € 12,000) was not enough for EZA to run its own secretariat, so that any work was performed by the AZK Workers Centre at Königswinter, one of the founding members.

Today EZA has 54 members, four applicant members, two associate members and eight observers in Europe. Funded by the European Community, it holds around 60 training events throughout Europe every year. In addition, in recent

years EZA has also run several research projects and offers advanced training courses for works councils and executives of workers organizations.

EZA can look back with pride on 25 years of successful work with various contributions towards the "Europe of the Citizens", informing Europe's workers about their possibilities for participation and offering them training to make them better able to participate. In future too, EZA and its partners will be continuing their work in a consistent manner with a high standard of quality. ■

## EZA General Assembly defines the focus for 2010

Consequences of the financial and economic crisis, sustainable employment, European social model and integration in the work process



Participants at the EZA General Assembly held in Doorn, The Netherlands, in November 2009

EZA has a lot to do in 2010. We will be applying for more than 55 projects. The focus will be on the economic crisis and its consequences for the workers. The crisis has led to a high level of unemployment, and there's no turning point in sight". These were the words with which EZA President Raf Chanterie opened the General Assembly held in Doorn, The Netherlands, in November 2009. Today, four months later, EZA can

already provide a preliminary report summarizing the many contributions to this issue made by its member centres, which will be looked at in greater depth during an international seminar held this month in Berlin.

The problems posed by the crisis will be keeping EZA busy for a long time. Ten percent of the EU's population, i.e. 23 million people, are currently without work. And so the projects adopted for 2010 by

the General Assembly concentrate on three areas: integrating people in the work process, sustainable employment and upholding the European social model.

Following the General Assembly, there was great suspense at EZA in anticipation of the EU 2020 strategy: an optimistic outlook for the next ten years with the Commission, Council, Parliament, member states, social partners and NGOs working together. EZA had been involved in the preceding consultation process with a contribution of its own.

The EU 2020 strategy contains many objectives that involve the social partners, including for example a detailed "Agenda for new skills and jobs" as well as supporting an "Industrial policy for the globalization era". Here the Commission sees the need for far greater political cohesion. Catchword cohesion: this is an area where the various stakeholders involved in workers training can also expand their agendas. There are still a great many possibilities – and a great deal still needs to be done. ■

## Regional conferences of the EZA project on the financial and economic crisis

Three regional conferences were held in Eastern, Western and Southern Europe for this project between November 2009 and January 2010.

The **Regional Conference for Eastern Europe**, organized in Romania in cooperation with Cartel Alfa/Fundația Națională CORESI (F.N. CORESI), looked at the causes and impacts of the crisis, the German model for social market economy as a best-practice example for Eastern Europe, the significance of social dialogue for workers in the current crisis situation and the social and economic situation in Romania, Bulgaria, Poland and Hungary. Other topics included the contribution of workers organizations to overcoming the current situation and to preventing a future crisis, together with the question of better regulations and control mechanisms on a global level.

The **Regional Conference for Western Europe** was held together with the Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond (CNV) in the Netherlands and looked at the following questions: How is the EU reacting to the increasing unemployment caused by the crisis? Is the German model of short-time working the right way to deal with the crisis? What is the situation with regard to youth unemployment in Europe? Can an ethical and moral approach prevent a new crisis from occurring?

The **Regional Conference for Southern Europe** was held in Italy together with the Fondazione Luigi Clerici (FLC). It focused on the structural problem of youth unemployment in Southern Europe, particularly with regard to flexicurity, together with the impacts of the crisis on this situation. It discussed the phenomenon of the "working poor" in Southern Europe

as illustrated by national reports from Spain, Portugal, Italy and Malta.

Those attending the conferences identified the main problems of the crisis as being the rise in unemployment, increasing social inequality and divergence of income, and a lack of solidarity on the one hand, together with the deregulated finance and job markets, the magnitude of the finance sector in relation to the real economy and the creation of even larger banks on the other. In looking to solve the situation, suggestions for a possible course of action included setting up training programmes in cooperation between schools and companies, creating additional jobs in the public sector, investing in social security systems and implementing better control mechanisms for the financial sector.

More information is available on the EZA website at [www.eza.org](http://www.eza.org). ■

## Activities of the EZA member centres in the run-up to the European Year 2010 for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion

2010 is the "European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion". Given that 17% of the EU's population lives below the poverty line, the intention is to increase awareness for the causes and consequences of poverty in Europe, mobilizing forces to combat poverty and promote social integration.

In this context, the ETUC draws attention to the fact that a decent job is the best guarantee against poverty, while on the other hand 8% of workers in the European Union have to deal with poverty in spite of being in work.

In the run-up to the European Year, EZA's

2009 Training Programme included altogether eleven projects that looked at social integration. The projects were coordinated by Bruno Machiels, Director of EUROMF and EPSIN (European Platform for Social Integration). Key elements emphasized in the seminars include commitment to decent work (thus combating all atypical forms of employment) and to "living wages" (minimum wage levels that safeguard existence), the significance of initial and advanced vocational training, the integration of young people in the labour market and the formation of networks and platforms to solve the problems involved. The project coordination

was concluded by the Social Conference that was held in Lyon/France in March, organized by the training centre of the French trade union organization CFTC entitled "EU 2020 strategy: a social market economy on behalf of people and against precariousness". For several years now, the Social Conference has been an integral part of EZA's training programme and sees itself as a forum and "think tank" for Christian-social trade unions in Europe. A summary of the main results from the project coordination will be published in spring 2010 in EZA's series "Contributions to Social Dialogue". ■

## Vocational training for young managers of workers organizations in Portugal

Organized by the Portuguese EZA member centre FIDESTRA (Associação para a Formação, Investigação e Desenvolvimento Social dos Trabalhadores), a vocational training course was held from 30 November to 6 December 2009 in Porto for new trade union leaders and young managers of workers organizations in the context of social dialogue.

The course consisted of ten compulsory elements and one optional unit, such as e.g. worker participation in the European social dialogue, strategic planning and project management, marketing and communication techniques. It was run by lecturers from FIDESTRA, EZA and the Portuguese ISCET Institute (Instituto Superior de Ciências Empresariais e do Turismo, Institute for Management Studies and tourism). The course was certified by ISCET, following close cooperation already during the preparatory stages.

The 26 participants from Portugal, Spain, Romania, Poland and Italy were highly appreciative of the course and its contents: "The course has helped to enhance our position at work and made us more aware of the problems involved in work-related and social issues. It clearly showed us that we need strong, innova-



Participants at a vocational training course for young managers of workers organizations in Porto, Portugal

tive workers organisations, and that social dialogue is fundamental in the individual countries. We are now better prepared to face the new challenges."

The next course will be held in Italy next November. It will be organized by the FLC (Fondazione Luigi Clerici) in cooperation with FIDESTRA and the Catholic University of Milan, which will also be certifying the course.

*Fernando Moura e Silva* ■

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