

OVERVIEW

■ Europe 2020 Strategy

Armindo Silva, Director of Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue at the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, explains the key points of the Europe 2020 Strategy at the EZA Initial Seminar in December 2010 and how it can be promoted by social dialogue *Page 2*

■ 25 Years of EZA



EZA celebrated its 25th anniversary with a ceremony in Königswinter in December 2010 *Page 3*

■ EZA Initial Seminar



62 seminars are planned for the 2011 budgetary year under the EZA education and training programme. The core issues: the Europe 2020 Strategy, combating the appallingly high rate of unemployment among young people throughout Europe, and the continuing problem of trying to combine family and job *Page 4*

EDITORIAL



Dear Friends,

What the member states reacted to with fierce defensiveness a few months ago became a reality in January 2011 and has been since: we are now seeing the first consequences of the European debt crisis and of the recognition that economic policies must be better coordinated. The European Semester is a cycle-based instrument created to reinforce budgetary discipline. This is one of the first initiatives to emerge from "Economic Governance" task force chaired by the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy.

Although the EU cannot really interfere in the national budgets, with timely strategic advice to the member states it can demand prompt position statements from them and make recommendations. There are no changes to the Stability Pact criteria. However, more robust supervision of national policies could ultimately make them more effective.

What could the consequences be from our perspective? The national budgets are being scrutinised in relation to debt reduction and the labour market reforms. For us as workers' representatives two points are of particular importance: social systems must be secured at an early point in time, and labour law must not be made any more flexible. As "levers" of competition, these areas are totally unsuitable for the citizens of Europe.

*Yours,
Roswitha Gottbehüt
Secretary General*

New EZA Board

A new EZA Board was elected at the General Assembly on 18 December 2010. The new Chairman is Bartho Pronk (Netherlands), who will take up office on 1 September 2011. Until then his predecessor Raf Chanterie will continue as acting Chairman. Piergiorgio Sciacqua (MCL/EFAL, Italy) was elected Co-Chairman.

The newly elected Vice-Chairpersons are: Janina Švedienė (LDF, Lithuania), Bogdan Hossu (Cartel Alfa/F.N. Coresi, Romania), António Matos Cristovão (CIFOTIE, Portugal), Herbert Metzger (CSP, Germany), Józef Mozolewski (Solidarność, Poland) and Antonio Torres Gómez (CST, Spain).

The following were elected board members: João Paulo Branco (CFTL, Portugal), Silviu Ispas (IFES, Romania), Anton

Kokalj (ZD NSi, Slovenia), Sofie Put (Ter Munk, Belgium), Heidi Rabensteiner (AFB, South Tyrol/Italy), Domenc Sesnilo (CEEFT, Spain), Joseph Thouvenel (CFTC, France), Diane Vella (AZAD, Malta), Robert Weber (LCGB, Luxembourg).

The new treasurer is Norbert Schnedl (ÖZA, Austria).

The new Board's period of office is four years, in which responsible solutions have to be found for major challenges in representing workers in Europe. ■

The Europe 2020 Strategy in motion – how to enhance social dialogue



From left to right: Armino Silva, Director of Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue at the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, and Raf Chanterie, President of EZA, at the EZA Initial Seminar in December 2010

The European Union has started to design its growth strategy for the next decade in a very difficult situation. The crisis that hit the global economy since 2008 is without precedent in post-war economic history. But despite the relative success of inbuilt stability mechanisms and employment measures that helped to sustain losses in income and jobs, the unemployment rate reached a record high 10% and for many Member States recovery perspectives are still very uncertain.

We need growth, but not any kind of growth. We want to have smarter growth (more based on innovation and research), sustainable growth (less intensive in natural resources and energy) and more socially inclusive growth that leads to more and better jobs and contributes to reduce poverty.

Lessons have been learnt with the experience of the Lisbon Strategy. If we want a EU plan for more growth and jobs to function and provide results, we need more commitment from Member States in driving forward the necessary reforms. We also need more ownership by all concerned stakeholders at national level. And we need better policy coordination between different policy strands.

The last few months saw the Union putting in place a new governance system for the Europe 2020 Strategy. Five ambitious headline targets have been set on employment, innovation, education, social inclusion and climate change/energy. Particularly important for us is the

objective to increase the employment rate (the share of those employed in total active age population) to 75% – it is presently at 69% in Europe – and to reduce by 20 million the number of people who are in risk of poverty. Also important is to reduce the percentage of those dropping out from the education system to 10%.

These EU targets will be translated into national targets by each Member State reflecting their different starting points and the diversity of situations across the Union. This is the ownership element: the Member States must be committed to their own targets.

The Member States are now invited to adopt their National Reform Programmes, setting out the policy measures that will help reach the nationally defined targets, in line with the "Integrated Guidelines for economic and employment policies". At the same time, they will submit their national Stability and Convergence Programmes, to be established in the framework of the Stability and Growth Pact. This is a novelty of the Europe 2020 Strategy: the two key strands of policy – structural and fiscal – will be synchronised, and this will much contribute to their mutual consistency.

The EU will monitor progress on three fronts: macro-economic factors, growth-enhancing reforms and public finances.

We are now putting in place a new annual policy cycle (see box p. 3).

The essential contributions for the success of the strategy have to be delivered at

national level. The EU offers a framework for the necessary reforms and the Commission will support action at Member State level through a number of flagship initiatives such as Youth on the move, An agenda for new skills and jobs or the European platform against poverty¹.

The strategy also needs more participation from stakeholders, and the question is how social partners will be effectively involved in the new governance structure. There are two levels of intervention: At national level, social partners should be consulted in the key phase of the elaboration of the national programmes. Such formal consultation is already done in the majority of Member States. It is not an easy dialogue, especially in countries that are confronted with difficult fiscal consolidation processes. But their involvement is crucial in order to build up the widest possible support for the necessary reforms.

At European level, we already have mechanisms in place that ensure regular information and consultation with the European social partners, such as the macroeconomic dialogue or regular exchanges with the bodies responsible for the coordination of employment and social policies. Social partners also participate in Council meetings on employment and social affairs. The Tripartite Social Summit is an occasion where the leaders of the European employers' and workers' organisations meet face-to-face with the President of the European Council, the President of the Commission and the Presidency of the Council. However, the dialogue can be improved, so that the contributions of social partners gain more relevance. Meetings are sometimes too short to allow for a true discussion. And their calendar needs to be adjusted in order to fit the new policy cycle. We shall come up with proposals to improve EU social dialogue at cross-industry level, particularly in order to give more time and space for the preparation of the Tripartite Social Summit.

One should also take into account that the quality of social dialogue at Union level is clearly related with the effectiveness of national social dialogue. Therefore, we shall continue to promote capacity-building for social dialogue. We are glad that

EZA does systematically involve workers' organisations from a wide range of Member States in their activities, and are confident this effort will be pursued in the future.

Armando Silva, Director Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion The European Commission ■

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/tools/flagship-initiatives/index_en.htm

25 Years of EZA



Robert Schadeck, founding member of EZA and EZA Treasurer for 25 years, talking of the early days of EZA during the ceremony celebrating EZA's 25th anniversary

EZA celebrated its 25th anniversary on 17 December 2010 with a ceremony at the Maritim Hotel Königs-winter. The speakers were Armando Silva, Director of Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, Elmar Brok, MEP and Chairman of the EUCDW, and Silke Striezel, Federal Vice-Chairman of the CDA (German Federation of Christian-Democratic Workers).

A retrospective of 25 years of EZA graphically portrayed the enthusiasm of the founding fathers – characterised by Christian-social values – in the turbulent years before the creation of the European Centre for Workers' Questions. What also

became evident was the geographical development from an initial ten member centres – primarily in Germany and the Benelux countries – to 60 full members, two associate members and six observers in 24 European countries representing Europe in its entire geographical length and breadth: from Portugal in the west to Bulgaria in the east, and from the Baltic states in the north to Malta in the south. During the festivities we also bade farewell to two founding members: Rosa Franzelin-Werth, a long-standing member of EZA's Management Board, and Robert Schadeck, the EZA treasurer from the outset. The entire EZA network is grateful to them for their commitment over the last 25 years. ■

Europe 2020: annual policy cycle

- January: the Commission will present its Annual Growth Survey which will report on progress and set out orientations for the coming year (2011). It will be accompanied by a specific document on employment (Joint Employment Report).
- March: the Spring European Council will give guidance to Member States based on the discussion of the proposed orientations.
- April: the Member States have to submit their National Reform Programmes and their Stability and Convergence Programmes.
- June: the sectoral Councils ECOFIN (for the economic part) and EPSCO (for the employment and social part) will adopt policy recommendations addressed to individual Member States, to be endorsed by the European Council.
- In the second part of the year, the Member States will finalise their national budgets and policy measures taking into account the EU recommendations.
- The cycle resumes in 2012 when the Commission assesses how Member States have taken the EU guidance into account.



From left to right: Francisco Rivas Gómez, Deputy General Secretary of EZA, thanking Rosa Franzelin-Werth, founding member of EZA and member of EZA's Board for many years, on behalf of the EZA network for her 25 years of commitment to EZA issues

EZA Initial Seminar and Activities 2011

Ten years ago in Potsdam the representatives of the EZA member centres gathered for the first time at a Initial Seminar to exchange views on the content and methods of innovations in the European social dialogue's education and training work. Since then, this annual look at the education and training programme for the following year has become a fixed tradition in EZA's work. The 62 seminars of the next budgetary year, which runs from 1 April 2011 to 31 March 2012, were the focus of the last Initial Seminar, which was held at the Königswinter Workers' Centre in mid-December. The seminar-goers showed keen interest in the talk given by Armindo Silva, Director of Employment and Social Legislation, Social Dialogue at the European Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, on the Europe 2020 Strategy and the question of how the social partners in the social dialogue can help shape its implementation.

With its education and training work in the next three years EZA will be focusing on core aims of the Europe 2020 Strategy that are particularly important for workers' organisations. A series of seminars in the 2011 budgetary year is to study the aim of having 75% of all the people aged between 20 and 64 in employment in 2020. Following an opening event organised by "Solidarność" in March 2011, the Europe 2020 Strategy will be dealt with in a total of twelve further projects; these include a final conference of EZA in February 2012, evaluating the results of the preceding seminars, and an HIVA research project, which is to subject to scientific analysis the issue of especial importance to EZA as a network of Christian-social workers' organisations, namely how not only more jobs but also better jobs can be created.

Two other issues are particularly important at present from the perspective of Christian-social workers' organisations: combating the appallingly high rate of unemployment among young people throughout Europe, and the continuing problem of trying to combine family and job. EZA is co-ordinating projects on these two issues, which were also discussed at the Start Seminar in a panel discussion between member centre representatives; the Initial Seminar also staged preparatory working meetings with the



From left to right: Bartho Pronk, EZA President from 1 September 2011, Raf Chanterie, EZA President, and Piergiorgio Sciacqua, Co-President of EZA

project co-ordinators Marta Jędrych and Michael Schwarz.

The cycle of training courses under the EZA education and training programme will be continued with two training courses for company representatives of workers' interests.

However, the Special Project for Workers' Organisations in Central and Eastern Europe will be discontinued in the coming budgetary year, as in the last six years since the biggest enlargement in the history of the European Union on 1 May 2004 the main objective, of setting up networks of workers' organisations to develop structures and reinforce the social dialogue, has been achieved.

A number of pressing problems were presented with short films by European institutions and trade union confederations and then discussed during the panel debate referred to above, which was open to every seminar-goer – a method that may perhaps give other project organisers food for thought in the course of the coming budgetary year. ■

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