

## OVERVIEW

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## EDITORIAL



*Dear Readers and Friends of EZA,*

*11 November sees the 100th anniversary of the Compiègne/Rethondes ceasefire between the German Reich and France/United Kingdom, signifying the end of the fighting in World War I. The peace was not permanent. It “took” a second apocalypse with World War II before the nations of Europe finally began, by founding the European Community, to give their continent stable order based on reconciliation, the rule of law and democracy, and economic co-operation. European integration has developed a*

*huge significance on surrounding countries and the world over. But what is its future destiny? We are electing a new European Parliament in May 2019. The election polls range from sobering to shattering: a surge in anti-European and populist parties is to be expected, some of them invoking and at the same time even trampling over a Christian heritage, denying their responsibility for the history of Europe. Can we still reach agreement on a shared understanding of democracy? Rule of law proceedings under Art. 7 against EU member states are no longer utopia. The fact that in some nations people are taking to the streets against populism, against their governments' interference in the independence of justice, media or anti-corruption, is an encouraging sign of living democracy. Democracy thrives on the notion of freedom and equality: the equal right. One man, one vote. It also thrives on social equality. So far, the EU has failed in this.*

*Sigrid Schraml,  
Secretary-General*

## EZA campaign partner of EU-OSHA again

**H**ealthy Workplaces – Manage Dangerous Substances” is the title of the 2018-2019 campaign of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work (EU-OSHA) in Bilbao. The campaign's major aim is to raise awareness of the importance of prevention, as there is still a large number of workers in the European Union exposed to dangerous substances at work. EZA, which had already been involved with its network in the previous campaign on the issue of “Healthy Workplaces for All Ages”, became official campaign partner of the EU-OSHA again in April 2018. In about ten seminars in the 2018 and 2019 education years, EZA member centres from different European regions will be broaching the issues of health and safety at work in various sectors (incl. agricul-

ture, the steel industry, the building sector, the civil service) and the role of the social partners and of social dialogue in preventing risks, as well as enlisting support for the campaign aims. EZA thanks the EU-OSHA in Bilbao and its national focal points for the content-related assistance with its seminars on this issue of importance to workers throughout Europe. *Matthias Homey* ■

## Millennials at work

On 24 and 25 September 2018, 53 young workers' representatives from 19 different countries gathered in Sofia (Bulgaria) for the Youth Conference organized by the EZA Platform for Young Workers' (PYW) in collaboration with Podkrepa, the Bulgarian Confederation of Labour.

In a world café session, participants gathered experience, examples of good practice and lessons learned on how workers' representatives can reach out to millennials. The first advice was to be present on social media with interesting and attractive actions and to interact with young people. Moreover, workers' representatives need to meet young people in the

activists to be visible on the frontline and to promote activities, allowing them to participate in decision-making processes and assume responsibility. Denis Strieder, FCG Youth Secretary (Fraction of Christian trade unions in the Austrian trade union confederation) is such a contact. He reflected on youth representation with Diomides Diomidous (DEOK, EZA board member). Denis said that his organisation would need to recruit 3,000 new members each year in order to maintain its current membership level. Diomides also confirmed that they did not have a long-term strategy in Cyprus to renew their membership.



Participants at the Youth Conference in Sofia/Bulgaria in September 2018

To start with, the participants were confronted with research on the so-called “millennials”, Generation Y or digital natives born between 1982 and 2000. According to this study, millennials are individualistic, narcissistic, less disciplined than their parents and dislike hierarchies. They are, however, tolerant, interested in the general good, support social causes and are activists. Moreover, this generation requires workplaces that adapt to their needs. They seek a balance between work and private life, they wish to create their own job description, need immediate feedback and get easily bored. HR managers state that understanding, motivating and leading Generation Y employees is difficult for many Generation X managers. Millennials are often perceived as job-hoppers but long for stability. Hence, job-hopping might be explained by the fact that jobs do not match young people's expectations. Andreea Mitan from the University of Bucharest emphasized the need for organisations to understand that they need to invest more in boarding and day-to-day management of this generation. They need to invest in matching the profile of the worker with the cultural environment of the work place and offer valid self-evaluation tools. During the discussion, it was suggested that financial reasons could also explain job-hopping.

offline world – in youth councils at local and national level and at schools and universities – and involve them at an early age. In Denmark, for example, you can join a trade union from the age of 13. Other organisations offer a reduced membership fee or additional benefits for the young. A third piece of advice was to create a group feeling or a feeling of belonging, for example by organising sport competitions, street events, a trade union summer school etc. Last but not least, it was agreed that trade unions must involve and invest in young people and diversify their efforts to accommodate different groups of young people. It is important that workers' organisations improve their old-school image and impart trade union values and work to young people.

The findings of the world café session were confirmed by a European research project on empowering the integration of young workers in the metalworking, manufacturing, transport, food, services, construction and wood industries. Ida Ricci (Filca-Cisl), who presented the study, confirmed that any strategy to involve the youth should focus on 1) organising and recruiting; 2) communication; and 3) youth representation. Youth representation means providing a contact person, enabling young trade union

At the end of the second day, participants were invited to put into practice what they had learnt and asked to develop a campaign. In less than an hour, they produced a video, wrote an Instagram story and developed an idea for a flash mob. Other ideas such as working with sketches and collecting stories of young people on why they joined a union were also strongly supported by the participants. The Youth Platform proved that it has a lot of ideas, enthusiasm and creativity to contribute to the EZA network. The issue of young workers on the labour market will also be on the agenda of EZA's kick-off seminar which will be organized in Bucharest in November in cooperation with Eurofedop and the PYW.

*Esmeralda Van den Bosch* ■

# The year of the Western Balkans

There is no strong Europe without successful Balkans

On 6 February 2018, the European Commission presented its new strategy, making the right move by announcing ambitious plans for a broad, new push toward enlargement, hoping to welcome Western Balkan countries in the EU within the next seven years. The strategy is a turning point for Europe's future, but it is also a historic and unique opportunity for the Western Balkans because the proposed date of 2025 is a motivation for them to forge ahead with the necessary reforms and to solve their disputes. Promising more development funding, the EU's new plans definitely want the region to stop being the powder keg of Europe. The strategy singles out Montenegro and Serbia as the current frontrunners and includes six flagship initiatives for the enlargement process: strengthening the rule of law, addressing issues of security and migration, socio-economic development, transport and energy connectivity, the digital agenda and the elimination of roaming taxes, as well as good neighbourly relations. The strategy aims to lay down a roadmap, and offers greater EU support to the region across a range of domains – from sending Europol advisers to making new investment, as well as commitments in areas from start-ups to transport infrastructure. After all, it is in the EU's vested interest – value-based, strategic, economic and geopolitical – to help shape the Balkans. But Brussels does not explain in its strategy how internal disputes in the region will be solved, and how such high levels of co-operation will be achieved.

Bulgaria took the initiative and clarified the tasks under the strategy. With the definition of strategic steps towards EU accession under the Bulgarian Presidency of the EU Council, the goal of bringing the Western Balkans back to the top of the EU agenda was largely achieved. The most important event was held on 17 May 2018. In the framework of the Sofia Summit, leaders of EU member states and from the Western Balkans proclaimed and reaffirmed unequivocal support for the European perspective of the region as a strategic choice. Joining the EU is far more than a technical process – it is a generational choice, based on fundamental values each country must

embrace actively. There are currently still no solutions to solving problems such as the rule of law, basic human rights, macroeconomic stability, social legislation, transparent and democratic decision-making, dialogue and partnership structures and practices. Workers' organizations, as the most active part of civil society, should raise their voice to increase institutional capacity and the expertise of legitimate civil society stakeholders, to be involved in reforms and the integration process in the region!

Trade unions should propose binding solutions for key reforms, including the rule of law and fundamental rights, tackling corruption and organized crime, improving the functioning of democratic institutions, public administration and the economy, and fostering good neighbourly relations. In that sense, social dialogue and partnership should support the integration process in order to benefit from that favourable moment!

EU integration is not easy – the success of any EU accession process requires the implementation of strong, well-targeted policies that can only succeed if built on trust among different social groups and if competent actors from civil society are involved. On account of its foundation and origin, PODKREPA has served as a stepping stone for Bulgaria's integration into the EU and it will gladly support brother organizations from the Western Balkans! I would like to quote Nelson Mandela, who said: „It always seems impossible until it is done“. Today the trade unions in the Balkan region have the opportunity to build on this positive momentum, protect the interests of working people and be the drivers of social change. The objective is not to shorten the tunnel towards the EU, but to make sure the light at the end is brighter, and to do it in a European way - with all the wisdom, solidarity, co-operation and pragmatism that has brought us together in trade unions!

*Veselin Mitov* ■



**Veselin MITOV,**

born in Sofia in 1959, married with a son and daughter, holds a Master's degrees in Linguistics (1985) and Economics (1989). He joined the Trade Union Confederation PODKREPA in 1994, was appointed International Policy Director in 1997, and elected International Secretary in 2003, which he still is after three consecutive terms of office and congresses.

A member of the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) since 2007, Chairman of the Social Policy Commission of the Bulgarian Economic and Social Council since 2008, he is currently the EZA Vice-President responsible for the Balkan Region.

## The EU Budget 2021-2027: what's next?

In the next few months, the Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) will be subject to intense negotiations between the Commission, the Council and the European Parliament. Back in May, the Commission expressed hope of reaching an agreement before the next European elections in May 2019. But recent developments across Europe, such as the appointment of new governments in Italy and Spain, have made it less and less likely that such an agreement will be reached.

### *Budget cuts on big expense items, new funds for new priorities*

The biggest spending categories of the current EU budget are the agricultural policy and cohesion funds. These are also the categories where the biggest cuts are proposed: a 7% cut in cohesion funding and a 5% cut in the Common Agricultural Policy. Investments in foreign policy, migration and security, as well as in research and innovation, are considered to be new priorities. Interestingly enough, the Council is suggesting cuts for research programmes in the 2019 budget proposal, indicating that the Council and the Commission do not share the same view of priorities.

### *What can be gained for social Europe?*

On the one hand, the structure of social spending has changed. Several of the social funds are grouped into one overarching "European Social Fund+". This fund will consist of three elements: the ESF, the Employment and Social Innovation funds, and the health strand. The budget will stay on a similar level to the previous MFF. The budget for Erasmus is proposed to double (to 30 billion euros in 2018 prices); this amount is intended to triple the number of participants. It is also meant to make the programme more inclusive and to increase participation of young people with fewer opportunities. The European Solidarity Corps, the successor of the former European Voluntary Service (EVS), will be implemented as a separate, independent programme. Finally, funding under the new InvestEU (ex-Juncker plan) for "social investment and skills" will focus on social enterprises, micro-enterprises and investments in social infrastructure.

### Single market, innovation and digital, incl. cohesion and values



<sup>1</sup> Other programmes under 'Investing in People, Social Cohesion and Values'

### *Proposals to connect the MFF with the European Semester and the rule of law*

Moreover, the Commission proposes new instruments connecting EU funds with the European Semester and the rule of law. A Reform Support Programme will offer financial incentives and technical support for key reforms indicated throughout the European Semester. It will be imperative for workers' organisations to ensure that not only proposals for economic reforms are given priority, but that member states are also encouraged to undertake reforms in the areas of education, training and labour market policies.

Finally, a new mechanism is proposed to strengthen the connection between the spending of European money and the rule of law and independence of the judiciary in the member state in which money is spent. This means that the Commission could propose to reduce EU funds for a member state in the event of violation of the rule of law. The procedure would be as follows: the proposal will be adopted by the Council, unless a qualified majority votes against the decision/proposal.

### *Western Balkans*

Although the new EU enlargement strategy for the Western Balkans mentions the possibility of Serbia and Montenegro entering the EU at the earliest in 2025, the MFF proposal does not foresee any budget for new members. However, a mechanism is provided for in the EU Treaties to revise the budget if a new member state joins the Union. Moreover, the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assis-

tance (IPA III) in the MFF has been significantly increased from 12.8 to 14.5 billion and will be steered based on priorities rather than country envelopes. This will allow the EU to reward performance and progress reached towards key priorities and increase flexibility in order to respond to the needs of candidate countries. *Esmeralda Van den Bosch* ■

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