

OVERVIEW

- **EZA at the International Labour Conference in Geneva: 100 years of ILO**



EZA President Luc Van den Brande speaking at the plenary session; International Convention Against Violence and Harassment in the World of Work *Page 2*

- EU Commissioner Marianne Thyssen on the achievements of the Juncker Commission: the focus on social issues *Page 2*

- The Belgian Member of the European Parliament Claude Rolin gives a personal account of his period of office in the European Parliament *Page 3*

- **New in the EZA network**



The Belgian EZA member Centre Européen du Travail (CET) Namur introduces itself *Page 5*

EDITORIAL



Dear Readers,

I ended my last Editorial here in April with the hope that the EU – in view of a Brexit spectacle in the United Kingdom unworthy of democracy, and young people reminding politicians of their responsibility for climate protection – would prove itself “grown up” in the European elections, and thus sustainable.

Europe has voted.

An encouraging result of the election is certainly the increased turnout, which in some countries reached heights not achieved for a long time – even though every other voter still did not make use of the franchise. It documents a resurging interest among European citizens in the EU and the belief they can make a difference with their vote – nationally or transnationally.

The people’s parties joined together in the EPP and S&D clearly lost, Liberals and Greens manifestly gained, right-wing populist, Eurosceptic parties did not celebrate the successes feared. What does the outcome mean for workers?

Given the new power structures in the European Parliament, for the first time there is a kind of unofficial “coalition talks” between the EPP, S&D, Liberals and Greens. It is to be hoped that the Liberals do not understand their “Renew Europe” in the neoliberal

sense, as this would not be a renewal but a regression into the old Europe under Barroso. The Greens will have to prove that they cannot only give their electorate – about a third of all under-30s – urgently needed climate protection measures, but also new jobs, as many jobs will be sacrificed to the transformation process.

As regards the sigh of relief whether the right-wing populists have been trimmed into a purportedly “acceptable” seat strength: we should not set the benchmark too low. Even if Salvini, Le Pen & Co. won fewer votes than they expected, their thinking reached mainstream society a long time ago, is being copied by centrist parties or moulded into concrete policy by government involvement. The social question is often instrumentalised in this. That is what has to be confronted vehemently! The pro-European political groups in the EP must throw all their weight into putting an eco-social agenda into practice: for implementing the European Pillar of Social Rights, creating a minimum wage, a European financial transaction tax, shaping the digital labour market, the binding agreement on climate neutrality by not later than 2050, just to mention a few... the EU would prove itself sustainable with such an agenda.

*Sigrid Schraml,
Secretary-General*

100 years of ILO – EZA at the International Labour Conference in Geneva

Nothing less than the future of work is at stake these days”, said EZA President Luc Van den Brande in his speech during the plenary session of the International Labour Conference (ILC) organised by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in Geneva.

He congratulated the ILO on its 100th anniversary, which is being celebrated this year.

For the first time since 2011, the anniversary ILC succeeded in voting on an international convention. It is aimed at helping eliminate violence and harassment from the world of work, and giving workers affected better global protection against such aggression.

The anniversary conference also focused on the report by the ILO Global Commission on the Future of Work, which had presented this ground-breaking document early this year to describe how a better future can be achieved in times of far-reaching and rapid changes in the world of work.

During the ILC, a declaration on this was discussed and adopted. It is an affirma-



EZA President Luc Van den Brande speaking at the plenary session of the International Labour Conference on 17 June 2019

tion of the significance of the ILO’s mandate in the changing world of work, a strong declaration of intent to the world, and a roadmap for the action of the ILO itself.

At the ILC, Luc Van den Brande said: “For EZA, the ILO is of outstanding importan-

ce. It is above all because employers, governments and workers here jointly set international legislation and monitor compliance with it. The centenary of the ILO should give us all courage, energy and hope [to work for a better future]”.

Norbert Klein ■

The focus on social issues: EU Commissioner Marianne Thyssen on the merits of the Juncker Commission

When I started this mandate in 2014, the Juncker Commission had an unprecedented opportunity and obligation to address pressing problems and concerns of the European citizens after the financial and economic crisis. Building a more inclusive and fairer Union was a priority from the outset. And we succeeded in acting fast and effectively on multiple fronts.

Growth and jobs are back. Employment has never been so high with more 241 million Europeans in jobs. Unemployment reached a new historic low. Youth unemployed decreased significantly.

More than 13 million jobs have been created since the start of this Commission. Poverty and social exclusion are going down. These are remarkable improvements considering our starting point in 2014.

A key success close to my heart is the European Pillar of Social Rights. It is the backdrop for all of our initiatives in the area of employment and social affairs. It sets out 20 rights and principles, dealing with three main issues: equal opportunities and access to the labour market, training and lifelong learning; fair labour conditions; and social protection and inclu-

sion. It helps to tackle social challenges of the twenty-first century while preparing people for the future of work. Social partners were closely involved and are part of this success. We have been now turning these principles into policies and rights into realities.

All European institutions – Council, Parliament and the Commission – committed to the Pillar at the social summit in Gothenburg. Now everybody is implementing it with the competences available. The Commission is leading by example. With new rules on work-life balance to help men and women share caring

responsibilities equally. With new rules that protect precarious workers – also in the new economy. With a recommendation to give all workers and self-employed access to social protection against contributions. With modernised legislation on health and safety at work, including clear exposure limits to cancer-causing chemicals on the work floor. We supported our young people looking for jobs with the Youth Guarantee. We invested in the labour force to make sure people can have the right skills with our Skills Agenda for Europe. Equal pay for equal work at the same place will become a reality all across Europe, with the successful revision of the rules on posted workers. And the European Labour Authority which will be established in the second half of the 2019, will help Member States to enforce the rules.

This doesn't mean our work is over. We will continue to face major challenges in



the future. The digital transformation of the labour market, new ways of working,

the changing demography, migration, and the transition to a green economy are important evolutions that we must accompany and help people to prepare for. We should not just undergo change, but take charge of change and turn challenges into opportunities and achievements so that nobody is left behind. To be resilient and to ensure social cohesion in our societies, we will need to continue striving for upwards social convergence across Europe and improve working and living conditions across the EU.

We have put social back at the heart of Europe. During the past 5 years, we have realised remarkable progress and delivered on our agenda. All these developments are encouraging. We can continue building on the results of this Juncker Commission to sustain a long-term vision of an inclusive, fair and social Europe.

Marianne Thyssen ■

As trade unionist in the European Parliament: Belgian MEP Claude Rolin draws a personal balance

At the end of forty years of trade union activism, I decided to run as a Member of the European Parliament. That was in 2014. The choice may have seemed radical, but now, at the end of this single term of office, my main feeling is that of having been a trade unionist acting in European politics. A legislative period during which social progress has been made both in little steps and in giant leaps, but European citizens are still awaiting a quantum leap. A glance in the rear-view mirror prior to carrying on sowing the seeds of the same battle here and there.

Tomorrow's Europe will be social or won't be. *"Asking a man to vote and then crushing him under the too heavy weight of inequalities is to ridicule him"* was rightly said by Marc Sangnier (1873-1950), advocate of social Catholicism and founder of the youth hostel movement.

Year after year, the European dimension of trade union action increased and seemed to me essential. As Secretary-General of the Confederation of Christian Trade Unions in Belgium (CSC), I was able to devote myself to the European Economic

and Social Committee (EESC) and to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). My term of office as Member of the European Parliament is an extension of this European commitment.

Five years spent between Brussels and Strasbourg, in a close relationship with the European trade unionists, and primarily five years of concrete actions to advance social Europe. Elected as a candidate of the *Humanist Democratic Centre* in French-speaking Belgium – a party claiming the historic legacy of Christian personalism – I sat within the group of the European People's Party (EPP). A place of combat for a trade unionist, but also a useful position: among the majority of conservative ideas, there is a real space for those who want to give substance to the idea of a socially regulated market economy and to the fundamental value of social justice. So, within the group, we were able to reposition the social focus and redefine it in the "Social paper" we took as reference.

In the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, of which I am the Vice-President, we did a great deal thanks to the support of everyone – all political

groups – that share this commitment to progress.

The European Commissioner for Employment and Social Affairs, the Belgian Marianne Thyssen, was a great help in pushing forward the social issues through multiple initiatives. Among them, I highlight the review of the directive protecting workers exposed to carcinogenic and mutagenic substances for which I was the rapporteur to the Parliament.

Cancer is in fact the prime cause of work-related death within the European Union. Between seven and twelve Europeans die every hour as a result of work-related cancer. Given this dramatic finding, the European Commission undertook to review the directive regulating carcinogenic and mutagenic substances (CMD) dating from 2004. The objective: to reduce and, if possible, eliminate exposure of employees to various harmful substances during, as well as after, their professional activity, by stipulating limits.

For more than two years we worked on drawing up and adopting an ambitious review. This will enable 100,000 fatalities

to be prevented in the next fifty years. Through this directive, “Europe that protects” is not only a phrase; it’s a reality. As a rapporteur, I had to champion the inclusion of emissions of diesel engine exhaust gases in the scope of the text. By negotiating, we managed to add them, and now the legislation provides for a professional exposure limit.

Better protecting the health of workers and making them safer at the workplace; a guiding principle for the trade unionist I still am. Having resolved this issue, I close the door of Parliament behind me by daring to say without blushing “mission accomplished”.

In 2014, when elected President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker had displayed an ambitious goal: to enable the European Union to deserve a “social Triple A”. Another mission he had was to relaunch the European social dialogue. Although the European Trade Union Confederation acknowledges the progress in this in its activity report, it still deplores the unwillingness of employer organisations.

Half way through the legislative period, the European executive had produced mainly opinions. But real legislative advances on the social level have been achieved in recent years. Take, for exam-



Claude Rolin was a Member of the European Parliament and Vice-President of the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL).

Originally from Bertrix, in the Belgian province of Luxembourg, Claude Rolin was born on 26 May 1957. Having been employed as a forest worker and building labourer, he graduated in Social Science of Work at ISCO (Institut Supérieur de Culture Ouvrière), and obtained a licence (equivalent of bachelor) in Economic and Social Politics at FOPES (Faculté Ouverte de Politique Économique et Sociale, adult education and training).

Close to the rural and agricultural world, Claude Rolin joined the Jeunesse Rurale Chrétienne (Christian Rural Youth) in the province of Luxembourg. When he was 29 years old, he became a full-time official, responsible for the district of Neufchâteau and the Youth of the Confederation of Christian Train Unions (CSC), in the province of Luxembourg. Ten years later he was appointed Federal Secretary of the CSC of the province of Luxembourg and member of the National Board of the CSC. In 1997, he became President of the Walloon Regional Committee of the CSC. In 2006, Claude Rolin was appointed Secretary-General of the CSC.

In this function, he occupies several offices: Vice-President of the Central Council for the Economy, member of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation, adviser to the European Economic and Social Committee, and member of the Consultative Commission on Industrial Change.

In February 2014, Claude Rolin became involved in politics and entered the European arena. This term as Member of the European Parliament (2014-2019) will be Claude Rolin’s first and only experience of politics. His current wish is to devote himself to the European social issues he takes to heart, building on his experience of lifelong learning.

ple, the directive dedicated to the balance between professional and private life, and the one relating to the transparency and predictability of working conditions. One of the greatest advances is undoubtedly the review of the directive regulating the posting of workers.

The high point of social Europe in the closing legislative period will have been the social summit of Gothenburg. The heads of state and of governments who gathered there agreed on establishing a European Pillar of Social Rights, a raft of measures signed off by the Council, the Parliament and the Commission. It seems that a window of opportunity was then opened in Sweden for the actual revival of social Europe. It remains to explore it in the next legislative period and especially to prevent it closing.

The MEPs who will voice the views of people in the next five years must frame their action in keeping with social progress and keep listening to the world of work and those who, like trade unionists, know the conditions on the ground. I myself will continue to champion these issues with trade unionism anchored to my body and my mind geared to the future, as we must conclude a common market: that of together building this social Europe that everyone places their hopes in.

Claude Rolin ■

New in the EZA network: Centre Européen du Travail (CET)

The Centre Européen du Travail (CET), which has existed since 1983, is an association recognised as a socio-professional integration centre and an employment agency. Its task is to put into practice training and/or coaching schemes whose aim is access to employment of the greatest number of people possible.

In order to respond to the various issues of socio-professional integration, the association is organised in two districts, Namur and Thuin.

Its social purpose, i.e. supporting outreach initiatives, lifelong learning and socio-professional integration training, is implemented in concrete terms by organising training and integration schemes aimed at a public consisting predominantly of jobseekers and working-class people.

These schemes can be:

- The acquisition of professional skills and technical skills associated with jobs in administrative sectors and tourism
- The acquisition of basic computer skills to combat the digital divide
- Thinking about one's vocational orientation and assessing one's skills
- Guidance in integration and job search processes

The CET coaches and trains nearly 300 jobseekers a year!

The public targeted by the majority of these schemes is primarily made up of

jobseekers at a remove from employment, combining a low skill level, long-term unemployment and major social difficulties. Different obstacles to mobility, to physical and mental health, administrative and financial obstacles, ... as well as a great lack of self-confidence prevent sustainable integration for this public. So, our role is not only to train them by teaching them the technical skills required to do jobs accessible for their level of skills; but also, to guide them by implementing schemes to removing the barriers to integration and to enhancing their journey, so they can access sustainable and quality integration.

The focus is on developing cross-functional skills required in professional life (e.g. adapting to the corporate culture, organising and planning one's work, ...) as well as social and civic skills, enabling everyone to take an active, critical and caring part in society.

Committed to professional equality, we also put a special focus on a female public representing a majority in unemployment figures and often wronged in their possibilities of accessing employment.

The figures for CET in 2018 are:

- 283 jobseekers trained or coached in long-term schemes
- 11 different projects for jobseekers
- 146 workers trained or coached in short-term schemes, ongoing training, skills assessment and/or professional redeployment

- 13 trainers contracted for 10 FTE (full-time equivalent)
- 20 external and professional trainers with practical experience

Marie Hermans ■

IMPRINT

Published by

EZA

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Design and composition

HellaDesign, Emmendingen
www.helladesign.de

Photos

EZA, Marianne Thyssen,
Claude Rolin, Marie Hermans

Frequency of publication

Four issues a year



This publication receives financial support from the European Union.



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