

Workshop in Rome 30-31 January 2018

There were 45 participants, 15 of whom were women (33%).

Key points:

- Collective bargaining had high priority in the region, especially in the metal sector. Re-establishing Collective Bargaining structure (especially multi-employers structure) and strengthening the existing ones are a necessity to deal with precarious work, increased wages and ensure a fairer distribution of wealth created.
- The economic crisis had made Europe more unequal as it had hit the South worse than other parts. Countries in the South were suffering from economic adjustment programmes that had been conditions for loans. They had had to sign memoranda of understanding and implemented "internal devaluations".
- The employers and right-wing parties would never let a good crisis pass them by without pursuing reforms that they had always been in favour of.
- There was high unemployment and quite simply not enough work available.
- The manufacturing unions needed to reinforce their collective bargaining coordination in practice, not just in words. Avoid that everyone was looking to their own countries without a European perspective.
- Bargaining power and public legitimacy of trade unions were interlinked. CB gave trust among workers and more members.
- The changes with respect to CB coverage had mainly hit private companies.
- Austerity measures did not improve the sovereign debt situation as also employment, wages and taxes went down.
- Common positions in unions should be the focus of our work in the framework of the Bratislava conference. Unions in different parts of Europe should act in solidarity.
- Migrants, youth and women were vulnerable groups in the labour market. Manufacturing unions organised lower shares of these groups.
- There was an alarming increase in extremely precarious work.
- Many workers were leaving unions. Old members retired, while new members often were white-collars. Necessary to take initiatives to inform workers of their rights, including agency workers.
- Not everyone is aware of their collective agreement or even that they are unionised.
- There was pressure on CB everywhere and a wide-spread pressure for working time flexibility.
- In general, social dialogue was being downgraded.
- Italy: Underground work accounted for 8 billion euros per year with conditions close to slavery. Minimum wages (pay rates) should be linked to sectoral CA and not be statutory. Minimum wages by law would mean lower wages. Companies might try to apply the minimum wage instead of the CA.
- Greece: Tragic changes had taken place in the labour market. Many workers were on the brink of poverty, millions of people were even below the threshold of poverty, in particularly youth. Precarious work represents 30% of the employment. Unions had been defeated in the struggle.

- The Portuguese strike against Saturday work had been a success.
- France: the effects of the El-Khomri law and the ordonnances of Macron on the labour market shall be kick in shortly.
- Spain: there are growing inequalities between older and younger people, men and women and in companies who got around the crisis and newcomers. Jobs are created with very low wages. This is why it is essential to reinstate branch negotiations.