

Recruitment and organising - working on strategy



(7 June 2022) Earlier today 20 representatives from public service unions in five countries participated in the final workshop of the sixth EPSU training initiative on recruitment and organising (R&O) strategies.

The process began on 10 May with an opening workshop on the key elements involved in drafting a strategy. The EPSU R&O team, with the support of Greg Thomson, former head of strategic organising at the UNISON public services union in the UK, then carried out individual consultations with affiliates from the five countries – Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Hercegovina, North Macedonia, Slovakia and Turkey.

All these unions were then invited to today's workshop for a final exchange and discussion about the next steps. EPSU general secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan kicked off the meeting with some background on how EPSU's R&O work had developed and how the full R&O team was now in place to provide long-term support for affiliates who wanted to strengthen their recruitment and organising activities.

Greg Thomson set out some of the main issues that had been discussed in the consultations with affiliates, noting how R&O strategies would vary from country to country depending on the different industrial relations systems and particularly the structure of collective bargaining. He underlined the importance of producing a written R&O strategy and, where possible, of using a membership database to ensure constant monitoring of recruitment trends and communicating with members.

Orlagh Fawl, head of strategic organising at the Fórsa public service trade union in Ireland, developed these themes further, setting out her union's approach to R&O strategy and campaigning. She argued that it was vital to have a clear communications strategy that ensured two-way interaction with members and non-members and ensuring that the union was fully aware of the main issues of concern for workers.

Finding and encouraging local activists and workplace leaders were key to having effective communications, monitoring membership through mapping and bringing workers together in collective action. Orlagh outlined the various steps in two campaigns where the union had been successful – one involving a small group of workers employed by a contractor providing cleaning to a hospital and the other a broader, national campaign that was instrumental in reversing an increase in working hours across the civil service.

Agnieszka Ghinararu from EPSU's R&O team brought the workshop to a close by outlining how EPSU was committed to working with affiliates to continue to develop and implement their R&O strategies and campaigns. She said that this workshop marked only the first steps in EPSU's collaboration with the unions in the five countries and that this initiative would be followed up later in the year or in early 2023 to discuss what progress unions had made on drafting and implementing their strategies.

EPSU would like to thank the European Trade Union Institute for the funding that covered the costs of the two workshops and the consultations with individual trade unions.

This [article](#) by Greg Thomson provides an overview of the workshop/consultation process and Greg also worked with EPSU's R&O team to produce this [basic guide to organising](#) which is available in 13 languages.

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