

EU ambassador to Serbia: involvement of unions is important in enlargement process

(3 June 2010) Mr. Degert, the [EU ambassador to Serbia](#), addressed the Central European group of EPSU affiliates, 2 June. He explained the EU enlargement process and what governments had to do to be ready for membership and fulfil the so-called Copenhagen criteria which include respect for the values of the EU, respect for human rights and the law and fighting corruption. Cooperation with the international court was a particular requisite in the region. Candidate countries will have to adapt the 35 chapters on EU legislation ranging from free movement of workers, goods and services to procurement, competition policy, energy and employment and social policy. These reflect 120.000 pages of laws and regulations. Croatia will finish this process in 2011. Macedonia has not yet started, and Albania and Montenegro are now knocking on the door with Serbia, Kosovo and Bosnia and Herzegovina also interested to join.

Unions leaders were critical of governments which did not support the social dialogue and asked the ambassador for an active engagement. The EU representative noted the critical attitude of the Commission in the so-called progress reports and invited the unionists to bring problems to the attention of the EU officials. The EU does provide also more general assistance to ensure employers, unions and governments discuss the EU enlargement process with each other. In his final comments he saw an important role for the unions to be engaged and active before but also after the country had become members of the EU. Colleagues from Croatia, Czech republic and Hungary gave examples of what they encountered and what had helped them.

Jiri Schlanger of the Czech health and social service workers union and member of the Presidency of the health and social services committee spoke an in memoriam for [Tamara](#). He recalled her dedication, hard work and many contributions to EPSU and the individual unions ending that “ we will miss her”. Colleagues stood in silence remembering Tamara.

The main theme of the constituency meeting was the impact of the [financial, economic and social crisis](#)

that is hitting the former republic of Yugoslavia countries hard. Union leaders reported on the negotiations with government regarding wage freezes, on the measures and cuts that were imposed. Most governments adopt policies of reducing employment in the public services. Some governments are even seeking to dismiss staff without any justification, an illegal act. Unions supported the proposal for action of the ETUC.

Other issues addressed concerned:

- EPSU finances and a report was provided on work of the finance group
- EPSU priorities including the [working time directive](#) and the health care directive, role and funding of public services (EPSU's tax charter)
- Work of the different standing committees and women & gender equality committee
- Project work in 2011

The constituency brings together representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia. Close to 60 union leaders joined. Chair was Vancho Muratovski. Presentations were made by EPSU Deputy General Secretary and EPSU's Josef Krejbych.

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