

## Meeting the Turkish affiliates - addressing rising prices and impact on workers and families



(20 June 2022) The aggression launched by Russia against Ukraine is one of the factors that is leading to high inflation and rising prices in Turkey. The trade unions address this in several ways including joint work by the private sector confederations to increase the minimum wages. The unions seek adjustments to the collective agreement for the public sector concluded last year and which does not take account of the high inflation. Another way is to seek amendments to local collective agreements to take account of rising costs. Union leaders had stories of how inflation impacts working families and especially the poor. Housing prices are skyrocketing especially in the larger towns and ripples through the economy. Official statistics are widely seen as off with 50% or more. This has a significant impact on wage negotiations where these official figures are used by employers and government to the detriment of workers.

Unions reported on the pandemic and the impact it has had on workers especially in the health and care sector. Many workers and people died unnecessary as protective measures were slowly implemented. Presidential elections will take place in 2023 and the government will be judged on its handling of the pandemic and the economic situation. Many are looking for change in leadership and government similar as happened in Istanbul and Ankara where mayors of a different and a more social progressive signature came into power following local elections.

Progress has been made regarding outsourced workers in the municipalities with many having returned to a permanent employment relationship. Unions are addressing the remaining groups of workers that do not have this protection yet. The unions of KESK are preparing for a new trial in the case of one of the leaders of SES, the health union on 4 July. She has been arrested and jailed in relation with her work for the unions. Strengthening democracy, respect for trade union and human rights and achieving social progress including addressing inequalities are concerns all unions share. We discussed the various actions unions will be taken to celebrate the work of public service workers on 23 June, the UN public service day. It will be used to challenge rising prices and underline the demands for more wage, more staff and to fight against commercialisation of public services.

The visit followed discussions with the Turkish members of the Executive Committee 4 and 5 May. We exchanged information on the process of affiliation, the complaints raised and how to address these. There are concerns about close relationships with the government and receiving support from employers at the workplace, the assistance provided to members while others see these relationships as a normal outcome of the work done to achieve a concrete agenda and are conscious about the sometimes-fierce competition at local level. It remains problematic that unions are differently treated depending on the colour of the political power in place in municipalities and public service workplaces with unions often losing their collective bargaining contracts.

The General Secretary met separately with the unions of the confederations Turk-Is, DISK, KESK, HAK-is, 16 and 17 June 2022 in Ankara

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