

Economic and Social crisis tops the agenda of Pan European Trade union Council

(8 December 2012) The priority of the PERC meeting was the [economic and social crisis in Europe->rub447]. Union leaders reported on the attacks on [workers rights->rub121] by many governments as well as media and financial circles. These attacks are part of their “crisis exit” policies as trade unions stand in the way of corporations and their political supporters to push through a neo-liberal vision of Europe unions do not agree with (see also the concluding remarks below). Other issues discussed: - Activity report 2011 - Programme of work for 2012 and further - Amendments to the PERC constitution; - Election of the leadership team. Mikhail Shmakov, FNPR (Russia) was re-elected President and Erich Foglar, President of the Austrian OGB, Mariana Kniesner, president of the Roumanian BNS and Joanna Szymonek of the Polish confederation Solidarnosc, were elected Vice-Presidents. The second General Assembly of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) took place in Brussels 6 December 2011. It brought together around one hundred unionists from Europe. EPSU’s Vasily Shilov participated. {{Concluding remarks of the PERC leadership}} Today we had the opportunity to meet as trade unionists from the wide European region. We exchanged our experiences, our difficulties and our vision for the future. PERC offers us a unique opportunity to do so. We leave this meeting encouraged that our values, our fights are common ones. We do not stand alone. Trade unions are a positive organised force in society. They are a necessary element of democracy. Day after day we contribute to social progress, social cohesion and justice. Trade unions are important channels for negotiating constructive solutions to tremendous difficulties. It is in this spirit that we work, at all levels within our national organisations, and within PERC. We are extremely concerned by attacks on trade union rights that we witness in many European countries. These attacks violate agreed ILO standards, the Council of Europe social charter and the EU charter on fundamental rights. We stand in solidarity with our friends in Georgia, fighting for the survival of trade unions and also with our friends in Ukraine, in Belarus, in Hungary, in Romania, in Bulgaria who are facing unacceptable attacks against trade union rights and freedoms, and against workers protection. National labour codes must respect basic trade union and human rights. Social dialogue is a key component of trade union life. It means negotiations with employers’ organisations but also, when necessary, tri-partite discussions with

governments and employers. Social dialogue needs to be supported by a constructive attitude and practical support of employers and governments. Unfortunately, in many cases, social dialogue is not taken seriously. It is not enough to invite trade unions for consultation, their views must be reflected in the decisions taken. Social dialogue also requires strong trade unions. Organising is a key challenge for us. The economic and ideological environment we are operating in is extremely challenging. We are all facing a crisis which has dramatic consequences on workers and their families. To overcome the crisis the solutions proposed by the IMF hand in hand with the EU are focusing on austerity: wages should be cut, hiring and firing should be made simpler, working week and working life should be longer; public services should be privatised. Social protection, when it exists, tends to be considered as a luxury. These policies are not the right ones. They do not work where they are applied. They attack the social fabric and democratic rights. They are putting the burden on those who have nothing to do with causing the crisis. We call on political leaders to change their approach, find the money where it is, tax the rich, end tax havens and tax fraud, and adopt long term economic plans and not simply short-sighted solutions. We insist on the application of a Financial Transactions Tax. The European Union is a leading force in Europe. As such the EU and individual EU governments have a particular responsibility in defending and promoting the European social model, consisting of industrial democracy, social protection and good public services. Internationally recognized labour rights must be imbedded in all trade negotiations, and diplomatic contacts taking place in the region. We are determined to bring our message at all levels, national, sectoral, sub regional and regional level.

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