

Feedback on the Croatian, Slovenian, and Bulgarian EPSU Affiliate strategies

Notes from the 10th of February. – Dr Greg Thomson

This is a short summary of the comments I gave on the 10th of February.

1. A big thank you to everyone for sharing their strategies. All the participants showed real enthusiasm for organising and recruitment, as well as a strong appreciation of why it is so important.
2. Please bear in mind this is only the start of a process. EPSU has committed to providing long term support for affiliates to develop their strategies and implement them. Agnieszka, Milos and Artem are there to help.
3. Nearly everyone had a written strategy. I would encourage all of you to ensure that you have a written strategy document that is reviewed and updated. If you share it with EPSU, this will help them to help you.
4. A written strategy in a short and accessible format should be used as a platform to get sign up to organising throughout the union. Not everyone has the same understanding of the importance of organising that all of you showed. It is vital that you spread 'the word' through discussion, education, and training. This is a long term and continuous process.
5. Driving forward the organising agenda is best done through a Working Group. It is not a Committee activity, where all the work is delegated to one person. You need a group of people all of whom are actively working on organising.
6. The essential tool for organising is a centralised computerised Data Base. It was notable that those affiliates that had such a data base were better able to target areas with the greatest potential for organising by comparing existing membership patterns with employment and labour market information. There was the added advantage that the Data Base made communicate with members easier. It was clear that while some affiliates only needed technical help with setting up a Data Base, others had problems with local gatekeepers. Establishing a Data Base should be a priority for all affiliates.
7. Affiliates in Bulgaria, Slovenia and Croatia often find themselves working with employers where there are several unions present. Affiliates should consider whether there is the potential for joint working or even merger. Competition

between unions generally only benefits the employers. Given the difficulties, this may need to be a longer-term strategic goal.

8. All affiliates understood that face to face recruitment and organising is most effective. During the current pandemic, this is more difficult than usual.
9. Social media should only be used to support face to face recruitment. Some affiliates were already using social media. It must be kept up to date and facilitate two-way communication. All of this can be time consuming and should not be left to one person. Establishing an Editorial Group can spread the work around and allow people to actively contribute when they may find other union work intimidating. Young members often feel more confident with social media and this can be a useful way of drawing them in to union activity.
10. It was refreshing to hear so many of you say that you wanted to get Commissioners and activists more engaged with the union. This is the very core of good organising. People can be encouraged through education and training. But they also need to see that the union is achieving things for the members and that their participation helps in this. The union needs to celebrate its successes and the contribution of members and activists to those successes.

I hope these comments are helpful. To recap: -

- Put your organising strategy in writing and keep it up to date.
- Spread the word and spread the workload.
- Make sure you have a centralised computerised data base.
- Celebrate your successes.
- Consider structural challenges think about joint working, even merger.

Crucially remember this is only the start. EPSU is there to help.