

Feedback on the EPSU affiliate strategies from Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland
Notes from the 26th of March. – Dr Greg Thomson

This is a brief summary of the comments I gave on the 26th of March.

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. This is only one step in a long process. Please bear in mind that colleagues from EPSU are there to help you along the way. Some affiliates are further along in the process than others and are already beginning to reap some of the rewards of adopting a sound organising strategy.
3. It was great that everyone produced a written strategy document. Inevitably, these documents varied in complexity depending on how far affiliates had progressed in developing their strategies.
4. Irrespective of complexity, each strategy document is a baseline showing how far the organising strategy has developed so far. This means the document can be used to promote organising within the union, which is crucial. But it must also be reviewed and updated, as the strategy is implemented and evaluated.
5. Organising can be promoted within the union by sharing the strategy and through education and training. In essence the aim should be to spread the word and spread the workload. The more people we get actively involved in organising the more we can spread the workload.
6. A few affiliates either had a centralised electronic membership data base or were in the process of developing one. This gave them two distinct advantages. Firstly, it helped in the analysis of membership, showing where it was growing and declining. This helped in targeting resources and effort. It also allowed the union to identify good practice. For instance, if membership was growing in a particular

region or workplace, was it because of something different that was being done there.

7. A centralised electronic membership data base also made communication easier. All the centralised data bases had email addresses and telephone numbers for texting. The data base could be used either for cheap mass communication to the whole membership or it could be interrogated so that information was sent to a particular subset of membership.
8. Everyone was clear that communication must be two way, so that members views are heard. And that face-to-face communication is always the most effective.
9. All affiliates saw free riding as a problem; indeed, it is a universal problem faced by unions everywhere. An understanding of the principles of organising provides the answer to this problem, which is another reason, why promoting organising amongst the wider membership through discussion and education is so important.
10. Organising is about building trade union power, so that we can get a fairer and better deal for our members. The problem is getting workers to understand that by not joining the trade union they undermine its power, play into the hands of the employer, and make it less likely they will be treated fairly at work.
11. Wanting to be treated fairly is an extraordinarily strong psychological driver. Trade unions are all about fairness, specifically fair pay, conditions, and treatment. The problem is that workers do not always trust that there is a link between their joining the trade union and getting treated fairly. We need to demonstrate this link by our actions.
12. Demonstrating the link between membership and achieving fair outcomes is a three-stage process. Firstly, the union needs to be seen to listen to members and pursue the things that matter to them. Then members need to be kept involved

and informed of progress. This means keeping them informed and asking them to take action, however limited, to support the union, so that they are invested in the process. Finally, members need to be consulted about whether they accept the outcome of the union's efforts. Put simply workers need to see that members determine what the union does on behalf of the workforce, contribute to the outcome, and have a say in whether it is acceptable or not.

13. Ideally this process should be replicated at local, regional and national level. Getting workers into membership and active at every level of the union. This all takes time. However, the further you are along this process the better organised and stronger the union will be.

I hope these comments are helpful. Please remember you are at the beginning of a process, now you should review your strategy, and then begin to implement it. EPSU is there to help and support you. Naturally, each strategy is different as it reflects the legal, social, and economic environment in which you operate. Nevertheless, every strategy benefits from continuous evaluation and revision, in light of what works and what does not work.