

**Working Group 5 Meeting**  
**4 July 2016, Brussels**  
Mundo-b Building, Rue d'Edimbourg 26, 1050 Bruxelles

**Working Group 5 “Social & Labour Policies and Social Dialogue”**

**Annual Meeting Report**

**Opening remarks by Siarhei Antusevich – Coordinator of Working Group 5 of the EaP CSF and an introductory exchange on the state of social policy reform and social dialogue in EaP countries**

**Siarhei Antusevich** welcomed the participants, summarised the day's points of discussion, and talked about the decisions taken at the previous WG5 Council Meeting. The meeting's participants reiterated the priorities that had been formulated by the WG5 Council, and adopted the meeting's agenda. The participants also discussed the following matters:

*The creation of a fifth EaP Platform.* The WG 5 members stated that the creation of a fifth platform remains the working group's priority. However, they also discussed other alternatives such as participation in panel meetings of Platform 2. In that regard, the creation of a Panel on Social Dialogue within Platform 2 is a positive development.

*Collaboration with EESC.* Various EESC members have applied to the EaP CSF Annual Assembly as observers; the meeting with the EESC could be a good opportunity to identify further areas of cooperation and their involvement in the CSF and WG5.

*Institutional counterpart for WG5.* The WG5 members agreed that the working group should seek out more interlocutors within the EU institutions. Cooperation with the EESC is certainly a positive development, but the group should think more broadly in involving stakeholders from the European Commission in its work.

**Discussion with EESC members from three Groups on the experience of EESC on matters of social dialogue**

The members of Working Group 5 met with representatives of the EESC's three groups. These are **Alfredas Jonuška** from Group I, **Andrzej Adamczyk** from Group II, and **Christian Moos** from Group III.

**The EESC members** made a short presentation of the EESC's functions and activities. The EESC, with a membership of 352 trade unions, employers' unions, and other civil society organisations, is a bridge between EU institutions and those interest groups. It has a consultative power: both the European

Commission and the European Parliament are obliged to ask its opinion on a number of matters. The committee also produces opinions by its own initiative.

**Andrzej Adamczyk** reiterated that the concept of social dialogue is fairly well defined and enshrined in the Treaty of Rome as the dialogue between social partners – that is employees, workers, and trade unions. On the other hand, the concept of civil dialogue has no such clear definition. The EESC's powers too are most clearly defined in relation of social dialogue. The concept of social dialogue underlies the committee's activities. The EESC's opinions are adopted by consensus among the three groups (two of three are parties to the social dialogue) and it is on the basis of the opinions so-adopted that the EESC enters into the civil dialogue with EU institutions.

The members of WG5 discussed the following points with the EESC representatives:

*The need to establish a fifth Platform within the Eastern Partnership's multilateral framework.* The EESC representatives answered that the EaP CSF is well-placed to lobby for this purpose. Indeed, the possibility of making such a decision does not lie in the EESC. Moreover, the EESC representatives considered that the creation of a Panel on Social Dialogue within the framework of Platform 2 is a sufficient step at this point.

*Improving cooperation between the WG5 and the EESC.* The participants discussed how to improve cooperation between the EaP CSF and the WG5. One WG5 member proposed concluding a Memorandum of Cooperation between the EaP CSF and the EESC. The EESC representatives did not consider such a memorandum as being necessary. They added that WG5 members can contribute to the reports made by bilateral platforms as EU-Ukraine, EU-Moldova, and EU-Georgia. WG5 members were told that they could submit specific topics to the EESC's bilateral platforms and ask that they be covered by the bilateral platforms' reports.

*Interpretation of the term "social dialogue".* The WG5 members stressed that the EESC's definition of social dialogue as a process involving exclusively workers, trade unions and employers' organisations neglects the contribution made by CSOs thereto, and their potential to drive it. In this sense, the EESC's definition of social dialogue is debatable.

Furthermore, Andrzej Adamczyk asked for a meeting with the EaP CSF Steering Committee co-chairs before the new selection process for the EaP CSF Annual Assembly to ensure the proper representation of EESC members. **Alfredas Jonuška and Laura Ernsteina** accepted the WG5's invitation to attend its meeting during the afternoon.

#### **Discussion on:**

##### **(1) Social reforms in the frames of EaP countries**

This session started with a question, raised by a participant from Armenia, on the role and importance of social topics, such as children rights, migration, and human rights, within the WG5 priorities. **Siarhei Antusevich** addressed this question to the WG5 sub-group coordinator on social policies **Naira Arakelyan**. According to **Hasmik Aslanyan**, the establishment of a dialogue between all working groups

of the CSF on social matters can be seen as a possible solution to this issue. **Sahib Mammadov** reminded the meeting participants that the WG5 was launched with a purpose to ensure a social dialogue between governments, employers and trade unions of the EaP countries, according to the tripartite structure of the ILO. Therefore, one of the focuses of the WG5 should be on labour policy issues.

**Naira Arakelyan** emphasized the importance of the dialogue and sharing of experience between national platforms of the CSF in order to implement best-practices in all the EaP countries in the social field. She also expressed her regret about the absence of colleagues from Moldova and Georgia.

**Ihar Rynkevich, Viacheslav Roi** and **Naira Arakelyan** shared their opinions on the cooperation between the EESC and the WG5. **Viacheslav Roi** stressed that the WG5 has to decide on how the future cooperation with EESC will look like. The decision on the WG5's priorities and working agenda should be finalised by the group members with a minimal level of external influence. **Natalia Yerashevich** suggested cooperating with the EESC at the level of WG5, but also the sub-group on "Social dialogue". Subsequently **Ihar Rynkevich** suggested preparing a report on the meeting with EESC representatives and a thank-you message addressed to the EESC representatives. **Viktor Khmilovskiy** pointed out that, in view of the WG5's goal of supporting the EaP countries' European integration, cooperation with the EESC is necessary. **Viktor Khmilovskiy** and **Naira Arakelyan** supported the idea of addressing a letter to the EESC, and proposed to inform the EESC representatives about the WG5's upcoming activities in advance.

## **(2) Social dialogue reform in EaP countries**

The participants discussed possible topics for the upcoming Annual Assembly in Brussels.

"The role of social dialogue in the context of ensuring security in the EaP countries".

They also selected the following issues as possible topics for panel sessions:

- "Adapting of labour market and migration processes in the EaP countries"
- "Implementation of European standards in the sector of social services in the EaP countries"
- "Adapting the European experience of equal opportunities in to the social policy in the EaP countries"

**Naira Arakelyan** suggested inviting representatives of European NGOs which work on the abovementioned topics in order to share their experience. **Naira Arakelyan** and **Siarhei Antusevich** agreed to collect further WG5 members' proposals for topics within 2 weeks of the meeting.

The participants asked the Secretariat to launch a separate WG5 Facebook group for facilitating the communication between WG5 members.

## **(3) The Ukrainian National Platform of the EaP CSF concerning the draft of the Labour Code of Ukraine**

During this session, the members of the Ukrainian National Platform updated the WG5 members on the new Labour Code that is currently at the preparatory stage. In particular, the Ukrainian members expressed their deep concerns about the absence of public consultations on the Code's content. Therefore, a statement appealing to the Ukrainian government to start public consultations on the Code was drafted. The members of the WG5 and the members of the Steering Committee were asked to support the statement. It was agreed to distribute the text of the statement via email and approve it within three days in case of absence of objections. Further the statement will be offered for the adoption by the Steering Committee.

**Presentation of re-granting projects: Vulnerable employment in machinery in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine: setting a common policy agenda and Decentralisation of social service systems in Armenia, Georgia and Ukraine and the effectiveness of service delegation laws**

**Siarhei Antusevich** and **Naira Arakelyan** informed the WG5 members about their projects, which were selected this year under the EaP CSF Re-granting Scheme 2016. The first project, titled "Vulnerable employment in machinery in Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine", aimed to produce a policy paper with possible solutions for decreasing unemployment levels in the mentioned countries' machinery sector. The experience of Visegrad countries on reforming this sector and on the subsequent changes in labour market will be taken as a basis for the policy paper. The second project, named "Advanced reforms, Advanced Civil Society", is related to the social services sector in the EaP countries. The project aims to improve accountability, prevent inappropriate distribution of budgetary funds, and make more transparent the social services sector. Another important part of the project is sharing Ukrainian and Georgian organisations' experience in order to improve the social services sector in Armenia.

**Training for the Working Group 5 Grantees**

A short training was conducted by the EaP CSF Secretariat for the WG5 members whose projects were selected for funding under the 2016 EaP CSF Re-Granting Scheme. The representatives of the lead organisations of the two WG5 2016 EaP CSF re-granted projects were present at the session, as well as the advocacy, communications and finance managers of the EaP CSF Secretariat. The training on compliance with the communication, advocacy and reporting standards for re-granted project was followed by many questions on related issues, namely on financial reporting and visibility requirements.