
WINS Second Transnational Meeting

29th of September 2021 – 10:00 am to 01:00 pm CEST

Workers' involvement in a changing landscape - the perspective of vulnerable groups.

Online – ZOOM
NOTES

This was the second transnational workshop, organized by the partner from North Macedonia, the Association for research, communications and development “PUBLIC”. The online event gathered more than 60 participants from North Macedonia, Spain, Italy, Slovenia, Belgium, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Opening of the event

Klimentina Ilijevski (Executive Director, Association for research, communications and development “PUBLIC”) welcomed the participants and elaborated that the inputs from this event are becoming a basis for exploring the kind of world we want to create, the kind of businesses we want to operate and support, and how these processes should be adequately supported by policy makers.

Luca Pastorelli (Executive president, DIESIS Network) has highlighted the focus on business model that are prioritizing the people, not on the profit. Giving intro on social economy's importance, especially in the pandemic's circumstances – he gave an emphasis on the importance of working for the people, the planet and the society. Mr. Pastorelli also discussed the upcoming activities during December, when the European Commission is expected to publish the Action plan supporting social economy, believing that this event and project are giving clear contributions on it.

Pedro Blazquez (Project manager, Coceta) shared info on the WINS project and its aim to bring together the good practices of social economies from different countries and to create mechanisms through which employees will be informed and aware of their rights.

The online platform of WINS project shares the available resources <https://www.wins-project.eu/>
The WINS project primarily aims to strengthen transnational cooperation between employees and employee representatives, but also between social economy companies and trade unions, in terms of employee involvement. The project tends to encourage employees to know their rights and responsibilities, especially when they become owners or employees of social economy enterprises.

Session 1: The emerging economic model - redefining employees' participation on the labor market as brought about by Theory U

Nebojsa Ilijevski (Holistic communications, North Macedonia) spoke about the emerging economic model - redefining employees' participation on the labor market as brought in the "Theory U" – a methodology developed on MIT. He was giving insight into the core aspects of the Theory U, and the awareness that it is bringing, he emphasized that we cannot tackle problems with the tools that we've been creating them: „Unless we see the capacity of the vulnerable, we will not see the society move forward. “ Also, highlighted the need of joint efforts and collaboration between governments, local authorities, businesses, CSOs in co-creating solution programs.

Session 2: Social enterprises and worker's information and consultations rights

Aleksandra Loparska-Iloska (Policy researcher, Association for research, communications and development "PUBLIC") pointed out that it is essential to shift the strong commitment towards a development model that places environmental and social sustainability at the center and that sees the social economy as a fundamental component of it. Ms. Iloska gave clear information and facts, focusing on the aspects that the social economy must be a significant player in the social dialogue. She shared examples of associations of social economy organizations count as formal social partners.

She introduced to the participants the general aspects of social enterprises in North Macedonia, that operate in a fragmented and undeveloped eco-system, have limited but increasing policy recognition, and there are also, emerging social finance instruments. But there is still limited financial support and access to alternative sources to funding. One of the main aspects of the social economy underdevelopment is also that they do not have direct links and cooperation with trade unions.

Session 3: Policies to enable employee's information and consultations rights

Overview of the available regulation in North Macedonia that enables employee's information and consultations rights

Maja Papatolevska (Adviser, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, North Macedonia) started her speech that in North Macedonia, worker participation is one of the most fragmented policy issues, dispersed in several acts related to working conditions, safety at work etc. This means that, in addition to the 2019 directive which establishes the general framework for informing / consulting EC workers, special directives are included, instrumentalizing workers' rights in this regard. All these Directives regulate the important aspects of the employment contracts, but also the directives for approximation of the laws of the member states regarding the collective redundancies.

Employees are also entitled to receive written information (letter or written statement from the employer), about working conditions, and there is an exception for workers whose engagement does not exceed 1 month or working hours do not exceed 8 hours.

In addition to the Directives, quite large changes have been made in terms of demographics, technological innovations, and this provides new forms of employment, which provides additional social protection for the employees concerned, which is an indication that employees must be informed about their rights in a timely manner and in proper form. The establishment of new forms of employment enables transparency and informing the workers about their rights, and at the same time enables flexibility in terms of labor relations.

The Law on Labour Relations is harmonized with both directives, and it is one of the examples of good transposition of directives. The law stipulates that employment contracts are a legal precondition for legal employment. The law also regulates the form of the agreements of the contracting parties, but also the content of the same. It has been established that an annex can be concluded, which is valid only if it is signed by both the employer and the employee.

In 2015, a provision was added stating that the basic salary is in monetary amount, in accordance with the Law on Employment, the collective agreement and the employment contract. The amounts that employees will receive should be included in the job advertisements, in order to reduce the uncertainty of the employees who will apply for a certain job.

Prior to 2018, the content of employment contracts was not binding, but since then all elements of the employment law have been binding, and they provide better information about their rights.

The other Directive 2002/14 carries the general framework for consulting and informing workers. The aim is to establish a general framework applicable in the EC. Such legislation sets minimum standards at the national level and is the first to be imposed on all countries. Member States may authorize the social partners to provide information to consult staff, and this process involves three flows: economic, social and financial development, employment structure and predictable development, and related measures, and decision-making. could lead to significant changes in employment. The information should be timely and with clear content and be made public.

If the employees are not informed in a timely manner, in the written agreements, they are not legally valid. For the redundancy, on the other hand, a procedure for consultation with the workers should be initiated, at least one month before the collective redundancy, whereby it will provide the workers with all the information about such a process. The right balance between information and consultation is important to achieve, in order to establish trust between the two parties. The better the consultation process, the better the results.

Employee share ownership plan as a model for transfer of companies to workers from Slovenia

As **Elena Galevska** (Researcher, [Institute for Economic Democracy](#), Slovenia) said unsuccessful succession does not only threaten jobs but also the wellbeing of local communities, leads to rural depopulation, decreases tax income, and increases social welfare transfers. Around 150.000 enterprises in the EU are threatened each year due to lack of early preparation, difficulty in finding a successor, as well as unfavorable tax and regulatory measures. Eastern Europe is especially sensitive to the silver tsunami since many SMEs had been established by the baby boomer generation in the 1990s when the ex-Yu countries started with privatization.

However, with new generations desiring to follow their own professional development and oftentimes moving abroad to do so, family successions are becoming a less popular option in the last decades. In Slovenia, family succession is relevant for less than 10% of cases.

Given that the employees of the company are the only group of people who have a natural self-interest in the long-term success of the company the local community and the local environment, ESOPs bring a lot of other positive effects.

All employees are included as co-owners of the separate legal entity, and each one receives an individual capital account, where their own wealth starts accumulating after the exiting owners are paid off. A contract between the company and the legal entity is signed, obligating the company to pay annual contributions out of its profit, to the ESOP.

This money is used to pay out the exiting owner or owners, hence may lead to a 30%, 50% or 100% employee ownership, depending on the previously made agreement between the owners and the employees.

Session 4: Information and consultation rights of vulnerable workers

Social mentoring - as a basis for creating an inclusive labor market

Katerina Mojancevska (Researcher, North Macedonia) introduced the innovative methodology names “Social mentoring”, explaining that it is based on the work of “Face to face”, a street paper from North Macedonia, that operates as a social enterprise that provides work integration for vulnerable people; The Association “Public”, the organization that runs the social enterprise, was focused on partnerships with companies and important actors, but the organization saw that it was not easy for people to retain the job - they might find a job, but not stay at it. The social mentoring was born as a need for a more structured program/methodology. It encounters the microenvironment of the mentees, but also macro environment, the society.

The methodology encountered the need of a social mentor – a new profile, more holistic one, that works with vulnerable people, that is linked with CSOs, support services, but also, with business sector. The social mentor also supports the professional mentor – a person within a company that employed the vulnerable person.

Milestones of the Social mentoring so far: developed Guide for social mentors with instruments for documenting/evidencing the process, Verified the Education Curricula for social mentors and trained 10 social mentors who worked with 20 mentees (10 mentors in process); Integrated this mentoring as a specific job profile within the National classification of job profiles in North Macedonia; Piloted the methodology regionally in Western Balkan and working currently in North Macedonia; Pitched the idea to public institutions and business companies and have them as partners in the process of recognizing the need for this type of service – recognition of innovation;

Supporting vulnerable workers in job transition

Alessio Nasoni (Operator responsible for Sportello Lavoro, CISL Firenze e Prato, Italy) spoke about the Sportello Lavoro, explaining the recent developments due to pandemics: legislative changes, flexibility of labor market, the feeling of being lost (for those that are without a job). The Italian job market is missing a network of efficient training services that will support job seekers, employment service agencies, which are responsible to help them find a job are dealing more with administrative issues. Not working on training and qualification that is a case in Italy. There is not an active policy on active employment and everything is based on word of mouth.

Being part of trade union organization, they have assigned person who is responsible to fill out job applications. They have 5000-6000 job applications in Florence. (Florence and Prato – are very sensitive areas of unemployment).

So, they opened this service that will fill a gap and provide the needed intervention towards active employment. They worked also on cultural change, providing empathy and support and technical support – to create a link active and passive job market. The service is free of charge, it offers a friendly space and overcoming the difficulties of the vulnerable people. They also worked with the “neo – vulnerable” meaning that they added several other categories that needed the support, including the foreigners who do not speak Italian, etc.

Practices on information and consultation rights of vulnerable workers from Spain

Josep Ricart Riu (Vice president, Garbet) started with an introduction about Garbet. Garbet works with people at risk of social exclusion, offering them services that meet the needs of customers with quality and efficiency, through a cooperative model that is based on democratic management, close to people and socially responsible. It covers 58% of the region. The cooperative’s advantage is that it withholds people who work in this process for involvement on labor market and that they turned them as partners with working in the cooperative. After including them, they removed the social risks, and managed to include people in enterprises, not only as employees, but only as co-owners. This step made the work more democratic. They have 5 centers, out of which, 4 are in different places in Catalonia. Their cooperative also is working on gender equality - not only trying to achieve labor equality, but work on same condition between men and women, also in salaries. So far, they have more than 300 employees, (this statistics is from 2020) and 51% are from the segment of inclusion. During pandemics, they faced difficulties because significant decrease of job opportunities and numerous employed people have to be entered into the unemployed system.

But, they managed to overcome this by forming a group that solves their problems. This group went to the people who are homeless, and the cooperative provided accommodation. So now, they don't have any employees who are homeless, they managed to do this with help from foundations. They have proper salary for normal life.

The event ended with a discussion and conclusion session.