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**“Capacity building for workers’ organizations:
Boosting
negotiation skills: Win-Win Negotiations”**

Serbia
21. -24. September 2023

“Capacity building for workers’ organizations: Boosting negotiation skills: Win-Win Negotiations”



Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies and Other Financial Organizations of Serbia RS BOFOS in cooperation with European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) and with the support of the European Commission organized a seminar with the theme: “Capacity building for workers’ organizations: Boosting negotiation skills: Win-Win Negotiations“, which was held, from 21. September to 24. September, 2023 in Vrnjačka Banja, Serbia. Including keynote speakers, expert speakers and the participants themselves, the seminar was attended by over 50 people. In addition to participants from Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies and Other Financial Organizations of Serbia- RS BOFOS (Serbia), the seminar was attended by participants from: World Organization of Workers – WOW (Belgium), Bank and Insurance Employees Trade Union Turkey BASS, Trade Union SYETE (Greece), Independent Trade Union of the Employees of UniCredit Bulbank (Bulgaria), Independent trade union of workers of financial organizations in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia (UNASM) (North Macedonia), Republican Trade Union of Workers- RSR (Croatia), Trade Union of Workers from the Financial Organizations of North Macedonia -SFOM (North Macedonia), Trade Union Organizations State Examination Center (North Macedonia), Autonomous Trade Union of financial organizations of Montenegro – SFOCG (Montenegro), Regional Trade Union Organization PODKREPA(Bulgaria).



Mr. Bjørn van Heusden

Ms. Slađana Sredojević

Ms. Mara Erdelj

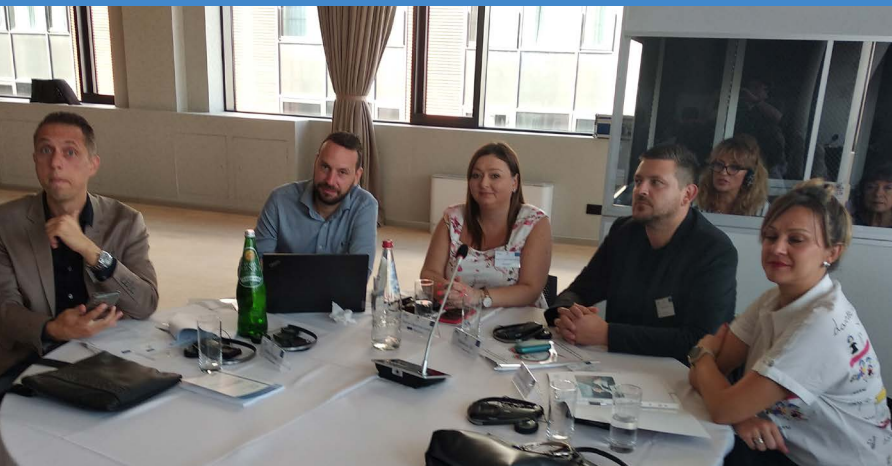
Mr. Boban Đurović

The seminar was opened by Mara Erdelj, President of RS BOFOS, and the participants of the seminar were addressed by Bjørn van Heusden, Executive Secretary, World Organization of Workers, WOW. The participants of the seminar could also hear the speeches of Mr. Boban Đurović, Mayor of Vrnjačka Banja and Ms. Slađana Sredojević, Expert for International Cooperation and Education, Head of the Center for Banking Training at the Association of Banks of Serbia, and vice president of the European Banking Training Network EBTN.





The most important aspect of the seminar was the education of the participants in relation to “win-win” methods and negotiation strategies. Another important part of the seminar was the education of union representatives regarding the use of an assertive communication style during negotiations. A key segment of the seminar was the education of union representatives regarding developing skills that would help them feel like equals at the negotiating table, regardless of the fact that an employer in a position of power is sitting across from them.



- Преговарање је обавезно, а закључивање колективног уговора почива на принципу доброволности

Prof. PhD Živko Kulić

Prof. PhD Živko Kulić, from Faculty of Business Economics and Law, Belgrade (Serbia), spoke on the topic: “Collective bargaining and the European legislative framework”. He especially emphasized that the trade union should choose competent, wise, honest and incorruptible people for the members of the negotiation team, who are ready for cooperation and compromise. Also, members of the negotiation team must be ready for the negotiation process and act as one integrated and a well-integrated team. Speaking about the conclusion of collective agreements at the European level, he explained that three types of agreements are concluded: Company collective agreements (at the level of multinational companies); Branch collective agreements (eg the Collective Agreement on Working Hours of Seafarers, concluded in 1999); inter-branch collective agreements (eg Collective agreement on maternity leave, which applies both in the private and public sectors). Professor Kulić pointed out that the strongest assets of trade union representatives in negotiations are knowledge and arguments. “Negotiators must be experienced, quality, competent and reliable people, and good preparations for negotiations are also required. You must always know what you want and what you can do. There should also be alternative solutions. The other side in the negotiations should neither be overestimated nor underestimated, regardless of the names and authority of the people who represent it,” Kulić said.





Mrs. Olga Vučković Kićanović

Mrs. Olga Vučković Kićanović, lawyer, director-FIDES, Center for Labor Law and Human Resources, from Serbia, presented on the topic: “Assertive style of communication during negotiations. Could it increase chances of negotiation successful outcomes?”. Olga Vučković Kićanović, stated that only 20% of people listen actively and that during negotiations. In order for the other party to hear and remember what you say, it is necessary to insist on interaction, as well as present your own ideas visually (diagram, flip chart). She pointed out five important rules in negotiations: 1. Give importance to the interlocutor; 2. Be empathetic (accept the other side’s point of view); 3. Do not offer a solution before hearing everything 4. Paraphrase - this way you will check whether you have understood the interlocutors well; 5. Be aware of body language (it is important to think about what kind of signal you are sending to the interlocutor with your body language). Speaking about the assertive style of communication during negotiations, Olga Vučković Kićanović stated that the essence of this style is standing up for one’s needs, while respecting the needs of others. She also stated that it is important to openly say what we want and what our interests are, then to argue our demands with an example from practice, to enter into negotiations freed from personal vanity, to control temper, to show good intentions, and not to reject a proposal that is presented to us that seems unacceptable, but let’s try to respond with a counter-proposal and summarize what was agreed. She emphasized that the assertive style of negotiations should be “back up” with adequate body language: optimism, self-confidence (not fake, but based on good preparation), a friendly smile, tidiness, appropriate clothing... Olga Vučković Kićanović mentioned as an important factor in successful negotiations is the importance of the “art of asking questions”. “Questions with “WHY” should be avoided, because they seem like an attack, they are not assertive. So, for example, instead of a question addressed to the employer that reads: “Why do you say that you are now unable to increase wages?” “, it is better to ask: “What are your reasons for not being able to reconcile the price of work with the rising cost of living?”, said Vučković Kićanović. Speaking about when to make a concession, she stated that concessions should not be given at the beginning, but at a later stage of negotiations, and that it is good for the trade unionists to create the image that they have given in to their own detriment, so the employer will think that he got the most out of it. However, she drew particular attention to the fact that trade unionists must know the limits of flexibility and must not exceed their powers.



Mr. Ivan Majdak

agreement, always go with higher demands than you want - but without exaggeration, exert pressure and promote demands through the trade union newsletters, talk with workers and members, prepare workers for the possibility of failure in negotiations on some issues. Speaking about the final phase of collective negotiations, Majdak emphasized that it is important that the trade unionists do not immediately and enthusiastically agree to the proposal of the other side, as well as that for each final proposal to increase material rights, it is necessary to take a break to consult with the membership.

Mr. Ivan Majdak, negotiator, President of the Republican Trade Union of Workers (Croatia) presented on the topic: "How to feel equal at the negotiating table? What negotiation skills trade unionists' need to boost?". He highlighted that well-planned negotiations are particularly important, as well as preparation "for all possible scenarios". In this sense, he said that it is necessary to: study the composition of the negotiators on the other side, establish contact with as many people as possible on the other side, find friends, relatives, members who know one of their negotiators, formulate demands well, prepare a proposal for a collective



Mr. Giorgios Tasiopoulos

When it comes to understanding the interests of the other party in negotiations (e.g. what is important to them, what sort of deal would appeal to them, what arguments they will make, who will make the final decisions, etc.) Giorgios pointed out that that kind of understanding "makes easier to accurately assess the negotiation context, develop an effective negotiation strategy, and achieve success in an efficient manner". "Indeed, negotiators who prepare by assessing both their own situation and their counterparts are more thoroughly prepared for their negotiations than those individuals who focus only on themselves." Giorgios pointed out.

Mr. Giorgios Tasiopoulos, professional negotiator, Trade Union of the National Bank of Greece-SYETE (Greece) spoke on the topic: "*Win-win negotiation methods and strategies. How to recognize the interests of the other party? How to influence the opposite side?*" Speaking about "win-win" negotiation strategies components, Giorgios emphasized that it is important to: **manage expectations** (never offer large concessions early in the negotiation process), **have a correct perception of the outcome** (speak modestly about your strengths and be sure to compliment the other party on their work) as well as to it is important to **show respect for the other party**, but also to **accept the help of a third party** in negotiations.



Mr. PhD Ivica Lazović

Settlement of Labor Disputes is the harmonization of labor relations and the improvement of social dialogue, as well as that this Agency includes strikes, to cooperate with social partners, labor inspection and relevant ministries. The Agency resolves Individual labor disputes (such as disputes about working hours; exercise of the right to annual leave; payment of wages, reimbursement of expenses for meals during work, transportation, vacation leave and other reimbursements of expenses; payment of severance pay upon departure pension, jubilee awards and other benefits; discrimination and abuse at work...) as well as Collective labor disputes (such as disputes regarding the conclusion, changes, additions to the collective agreement; application of the collective agreement, exercise of the right to organize a trade union; strike; exercising the right to information, consultation and participation of employees in management,...).

Mr. PhD Ivica Lazović, director of the Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labor Disputes of Republic of Serbia (Serbia) spoke to the participants about what if, despite all efforts, a conflict come up in the negotiations process, as well as about advantages of peaceful dispute resolution and mediation in labor disputes. He emphasized the advantages of peaceful settlement of labor disputes, especially pointing out that this type of settlement is: fast, free, professional, voluntary, impartial and independent. He said that a good social dialogue and a well-defined collective agreement bring out the maximum for all parties in real “win-win” circumstances and that the goal of the Republic Agency for Peaceful



Ms. Assoc. Prof. PhD Emina Karo

deeply-rooted collaboration, as well as the fact that employers and unions see their ongoing co-operation as the foundation of the Scandinavian economy and as the guarantor of the region’s high standard of living. “Everyone expect deal in Nordic system. Scandinavian countries don’t have a lot of labour laws. The most things are up for negotiations between unions and employer representatives” said Emina Karo. She added EU ambition is 80% collective bargaining coverage.

Ms. Assoc. Prof. PhD Emina Karo, (Turkey) spoke on the topic: “10 most important things for successful win win negotiations and their applicability-experiences from Scandinavian and other European countries”. Speaking of 10 most important things for successful win win negotiations Emina Karo emphasized the key strategies: good plan (“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail”); to maintain self-discipline, to find the best approach, to control the pace of a negotiation, getting used to hearing “No”, not to make important decisions too quickly, not taking things personally, anticipateing manageing objections, ending the negotiation in positive way. As the key factors of good practice that achieves success in negotiations in the Scandinavian countries, Emina Caro mentioned a very long history in negotiations, a special culture in which employers’ associations and trade unions have a system of



The seminar topics were important for trade union representatives in particular, because the participants had the opportunity to learn how to focus on the interests of the other side in negotiations, which is crucial for this type of negotiation. The seminar participants learned to recognize the interests of the other side. The seminar participants were able to exchange experiences related to good practice and valuable experiences from the Scandinavian countries regarding win-win methods and negotiation strategies. Workshops were held during the seminar, and the seminar participants were divided into two working groups. One group simulated a “win-win” negotiation, and the other a “win – lose” negotiation in which a dispute arose, so the Agency for Peaceful Resolution of Labor Disputes should be engaged. The workshops were led by Olga Vučković Kićanović and Prof. dr. Zivko Kulic. As for the results of the seminar, the participants agreed that a “win-win” result of the negotiations can be achieved only when the parties in the negotiations recognize each other’s interests. Knowing and understanding mutual interests is necessary to achieve a result that is satisfactory for both parties. In addition, knowledge and arguments should be demonstrated in negotiations, and negotiators should be experienced, quality, competent and reliable people. The solution lies in dialogue - searching for a mutually sustainable solution, and that is precisely the solution that benefits both parties, that is, a solution in which there are no losers. They also pointed to the need to publicly advocate the importance of social dialogue at the company, sector, national level, and especially at the level of the whole of Europe, so that employers, who have the leverage of power, willingly approach collective negotiations and treat the union as an equal partner. The participants of the seminar also believe that it is necessary to strengthen the culture of mutual respect and appreciation in the relationship between the employer and the union, in order to respect the interests of both parties during the negotiations, and as a result of the negotiations, a “win-win” solution will be obtained. One of the conclusions is that the trade unions should be focused on strengthening their own organizational structure, also on recruiting new members in order to gain numbers, and thus the real strength they need in negotiations. Another important conclusion was that trade unions should be ready to use institutions and individuals in their countries that deal with the peaceful resolution of labor disputes and mediation as help in negotiations.



16:45 - 17:15 International Round table: Part I
 Examples of good practice win-win negotiations

Participants:
 The Netherlands: Bion van Hecke, Executive Secretary, World Organization of Workers, WOV
 Croatia: Anja Štomić, vice-president, Republican trade union of workers (RSTZ)
 Bosnia and Herzegovina: Minka Nedžadović, president of Trade Union of the employees at the Financial Organizations of Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (SFOP-BoH)
 North Macedonia: Boban Stanić, president of Trade Union of the Financial Organizations of N. Macedonia (SFOPM)

18:15 - 17:45 International Round table: Part II
 Examples of good practice win-win negotiations

Participants:
 Bulgaria: Nikolay Hristov, deputy president of the Trade Union of the employees in the Financial Organizations of Montenegro (SFOPG)
 Greece: Vasilis Mantzaris, Executive Board member - TU of National Bank of Greece (SYETE)
 Serbia: Tihomir Jevicki, president of the Trade Union of Erste Bank Serbia, vice-president of RS BOFOS

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR WORKERS' QUESTIONS
 CARING ABOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EDUCATION SINCE 1985

17:45 - 18:45 International Round table: Part II
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18:45 - 19:00 Discussion

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Round table I
 Exchange of experiences

Round table II
 Exchange of experiences

The seminar was covered by the media, with a report for workers' organizations on the Vrnjačka Banja TV.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=moJMLvUGFHW>

Seminar participants adopted Declaration in which they emphasized that the trade unions should promote social dialogue at the European level, as well as at the national level, through trade union activities, as well as building and strengthening the capacity of trade unions across Europe. The Declaration also states that unions should strive to provide mutual respect between workers and employers as the basis for further societal development, promote social dialogue at all levels; initiate efforts for collective bargaining and the conclusion of collective agreements; avoid any conflicts among different unions; foster a spirit of tolerance and respect for arguments, both in everyday life and in collective negotiations; ensure the independence of unions from any external influence from politics and capital; further develop collaboration, solidarity, and networking among the unions of our countries, through joint activity to protect workers' rights, workplace safety, gender equality, climate change, and green policies; collaborate and provide protection for the rights of workers who are members of unions from other countries temporarily working in our countries and safeguard minimum labor rights standards, and to promote solidarity, freedom, and equality as the highest values of the labor movement. "Social peace cannot be achieved through domination and divisions but through the pursuit of global job security, the expansion of the scope of labor freedom, and ending the dominance of capital over labor", was the conclusion of the seminar participants.

