



This measure is funded by the European Union.



Equal opportunities in the labour market: Creating an inclusive labour market for all generations. Young and older workers - two sides of the same coin!

Serbia, Kladovo
from 12. 06. to 16.06. 2024.

Equal opportunities in the labour market: Creating an inclusive labour market for all generations. Young and older workers - two sides of the same coin!



Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies and Other Financial Organizations of Serbia RS BOFOS, in cooperation with the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) and with the support of the European Commission, organized a seminar with the theme: "Equal opportunities in the labour market: Creating an inclusive labour market for all generations. Young and older workers - two sides of the same coin!", which was held in Kladovo Serbia from 12. 06. to 16.06. 2024.

Including keynote speakers, expert speakers, and participants, the seminar was attended by over 70 people. In addition to participants from the Republican Trade Union of Employees in Banks, Insurance Companies, and Other Financial Organizations of Serbia- RS BOFOS (Serbia), the seminar was attended by participants and speakers from: Trade Union KRIFA-Kristelig Fagbevelgeze (Denmark), Bank and Insurance Employees Trade Union Turkey BASS, Trade Union SYETE (Greece), Independent Trade Union of UniCredit Bulbank Employees (Bulgaria), UBB - United Bulgarian Bank Trade Union (Bulgaria), IFES - The Economic and Social Training Institute (Romania), 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), LDF Education Centre (Lithuanian Labour Federation Education Centre) (Lithuania), LDF - Lithuanian Labour Federation AQ WIRING SYSTEM UAB employees trade union (Lithuania), CEAT Spanish center for workers' issues - CEAT (Spain), CFTC Franch Confederation of Christian Workers (France), ÖZA -Austrian Center for Worker Education, (Austria), Republican Trade Union of Workers- RSR (Croatia), Sindikatul liber TERAPIA (Romania), FIDESTRA Association for Training, Research and Social Development of Workers (Portugal), Trade Union of Workers from the Financial Organizations of North Macedonia -SFOM (North Macedonia), Autonomous Trade Union of financial organizations of Montenegro – SFOCG (Montenegro), Confederation of Labor PODKREPA (Bulgaria).

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR
WORKERS' QUESTIONS

LEARNING ABOUT WORKERS'
RIGHTS AND EDUCATION
SINCE 1985

Republički sindikat zaposlenih u bankama,
osiguravajućim društvima i
drugim finansijskim organizacijama Srbije,
RS BOFOS



Mrs. Mara Erdelj, President of RS BOFOS, opened the seminar. The seminar participants also heard the introductory speeches of **Mr. Joseph Thouvanel**, member of the EZA Council, **Mr. Silviu Ispas**, member of the Council of EZA, and **Mr. Ljuban Bulić**, EZA Policy officer for education and training.





The most important aspect of the seminar was the education of the participants about promoting the transfer of knowledge between generations, as well as pointing out the characteristics, beliefs, and life experiences that define each generation, influencing how they work, communicate, and react to changes in their work environment. Communication is necessary for the transfer of knowledge. Communication between older and younger workers is precisely the critical factor. Intergenerational communication is essential in the process of integration of both groups into the labor market. For this reason, the seminar's emphasis was precisely on the ways, that is, the specifics of communication of both generations and intergenerational communication.







Kristina Noreikienė



Mikael Arendt Laursen

Ms. Kristina Noreikienė, EZA PYW member - EZA Platform for Young Workers and president of the LDF Youth from Lithuania, within her topic: “Different generations and their views on the topic of work, “ presented the results of the seminar organized for the EZA PYW entitled: “How to build a bridge between older and younger workers.”

She stated that the “generation gap” refers to the differences between generations - mutual characteristics, attributes, and personal qualities and includes work ethics, moral values, political views, and attitudes toward technology...

“Boomers are used to long workdays at the office, while Gen Y and Gen Z prefer flexible hours and remote work. She emphasized that mature workers are often happy with assignments and projects, while young workers prefer group-based work and daily feedback.

Ms. Noreikienė, speaking about the different communication styles, said that Generation Y and Generation Z usually send text messages and tweets, while “boomers” and Generation X prefer phone calls and e-mails. “ Younger workers tend to use abbreviations and slang, and now you got serious communication breakdown,” stressed **Kristina Noreikienė**.

She gave some valuable tips on how to overcome the generation gap, such as focusing on similarities rather than differences between the various generations, respecting each other values, avoiding stereotypes, and adjusting communication methods.

Mr. Mikael Arendt Laursen, Vice President of “ KRIFA” and Vice President of WOW Europe and WOW World from Denmark, within his topic: “The Danish labor market today and reflections on how to embrace a new generation of workers.” He said that today’s systems

(those dealing with unemployment benefits, pensions, etc.) - are based on outdated views of the labor market. Mr. Laursen also said that a young generation is entering the Danish labor market and making demands on employers different from those in the past.

“They want a close and personal relationship with their manager. They say no to the less attractive tasks. They expect to be able to work creatively from day one. They talk about their stress and anxiety and show their vulnerability. They just quit without having another job.” **Mr Laursen** stressed.



Sara Askholm



Speaking about the differences between Generations X and Z in relation to their different approaches to the labor market, he concluded that regardless of the differences (for example, Generation X is known for a strong work ethic, valuing job stability, and being loyal to their employers, while Gen Z values flexibility in the workplace the most), he made some important conclusions about how to get the best out of both generations.

“To integrate the strengths of both generations, companies should focus on creating a flexible work environment that can accommodate different needs. Generation X can share their extensive professional experience knowledge with Generation Z through mentorship programs. At the same time, Generation Z can introduce new technologies to increase efficiency. Generation Z often brings innovative ideas and new perspectives on how to improve workflows. Generation X can help implement these ideas by ensuring they fit into the existing company culture and business strategy, “ **Mikael Arendt Laursen** emphasized. He ended his lecture with encouraging words:

The future looks fascinating!

The future looks scary! Or at least full of changes.

We do a lot to try to predict and prepare for the future. And that is good! We have to do that.

But we also have to involve future generations in this. They are the future!

Ms. Sara Askholm, cand.ped.IT and “KRIFA” board member from Denmark spoke about: “A cross-generational dialogue-based workout: How a common language on job satisfaction can strengthen cross-generational communication in our workplaces.” She stated that communication between different generations, people from different geographical distances, and people with different norms, values, and cultural ideals is incredibly complex and that we need to make it more accessible. “We need a common language that eliminates geographical and age-related barriers, and we must establish a common framework for communication on work-life balance. Those things will facilitate mutual understanding and dialogue”, said **Sara Askholm.**

She emphasized that the employee's motivation affects the increase in the company's profit. She also stated that the employees' autonomy in work and a good balance between private life and work are some of the key factors that bring betterment to employees and more profit to the company itself.

"Enhancing overall work motivation by one point could increase the total profit of Danish companies by 7.4 billion DKK (993.6 million EUR)", said Sara Askholm.

The absence of a work-life balance and the employee's lack of autonomy in their work results in a high frequency of sick leave.

She added that employees with low autonomy take 3.6 more sick days annually, and those with low work-life balance take 3.9 more.

Sarah Askholm especially emphasized the importance of employees having a sense of purpose in their work. She added that research conducted by the Danish trade union Krifa showed that employees strive to "contribute to something bigger than themselves," that matching work with personal values increases work satisfaction, and that organizations with a clear mission attract and retain employees. She called the sense of purpose a "common language tool" that can improve communication between different generations.



Silviu Ispas

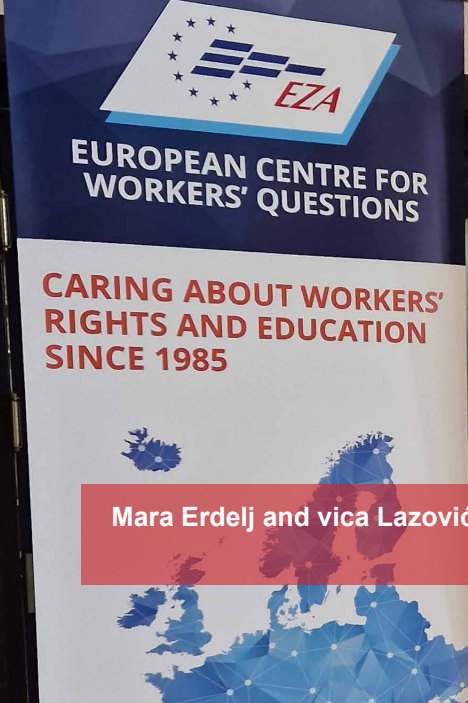
Mr. Silviu Ispas, Director (IFES), The Economic and Social Training Institute from Romania, within his topic: "Older VS Young Workers. Members of Different Generations and Their Status in The Labor Market. Possibilities of Inclusion of Both Groups in The Labor Market".

He pointed out that the employment rate decreases with age. He said that this figure drops drastically over the age of 65, showing statistical data (in 2021, the number of employed Europeans was 46.4% aged 60-64; then 13.2% aged 65-69; 4,9% of 70-74-year-olds and 1.4% of over 75-year-olds.)

However, regardless of these data, he said that young people in Europe are struggling for work, facing numerous challenges or factors.

Young people face economic factors such as low wages, job insecurity, high cost of living, and student loan debt. Work attitude factors: Young people prioritize work-life balance, personal fulfillment, and flexibility over traditional career paths and look for alternative ways to earn a living, such as freelancers and entrepreneurs... European youth are also facing technological and automation factors: the rise of technology and automation has led to changes in the labor market, making some traditional jobs obsolete.

He also cited the mismatch between young people's skills and the jobs available on the labor market and the lack of opportunities: "In some regions or industries, there may be a lack of employment opportunities for younger people," said **Silviu Ispas**.



Mara Erdelj and vica Lazović



Regarding Southeast Europe, he stated that new entrants to the labor market need to be equipped with the skills employers need and that unemployment in this region is more than twice as high for young people as for adults.

Regarding generational differences, Silviu Ispas stated that young generations have a different work culture.

“Kids these days want to be able to have a life outside of the office. They don’t want long working hours, but rather they want to focus on getting the work done and getting time off whenever they can,” **Ispas said.**

He also stated that older generations usually prefer to have their work recognized and receive an annual raise. They also prefer hierarchy in the office. Younger workers want immediate rewards for their work.

However, he stated that the most important thing is that the young generations can prepare for the labor market, learn how to start from the beginning, gain experience, and prepare to replace their senior colleagues.

Mr. Ivica Lazović, PhD, Director of the Agency for Peaceful Resolution labor disputes from Serbia, spoke on the topic “Can the generation gap and intergenerational misunderstanding on workplace to cause communication breakdown, discrimination, and mobbing?” He said the generation gap can lead to unconscious or conscious prejudices and stereotypes. For example, older workers may be seen as less adaptable or unable to use new technology, while younger workers may be seen as less experienced or less committed. All of the above can lead to discrimination in employment, career advancement, or task assignment. “Differences in values, work habits, and expectations can create generational tensions. This can result in mobbing, where older workers may belittle or sabotage younger colleagues or vice versa. “Mobbing can include verbal abuse, social isolation, or unfair assessment of work,” **Lazović** pointed out.

Speaking about how to mitigate the negative consequences of the generation gap within the company, he stated that it is necessary to: promote intergenerational understanding (organize training and workshops that help employees understand and appreciate the differences between generations), encourage open communication (create an environment where all employees are encouraged to freely express their opinions and where different communication styles are respected), implement policies against discrimination and mobbing (clearly define and enforce rules that prohibit discrimination and mobbing, and ensure that all employees are aware of these policies). **Lazović** pointed out that everyone has a role in reducing the generation gap, including employers and trade unions. Stating the role of unions, he emphasized that unions should represent the interests of all generations, provide support and advise employees in case of conflicts that may be the result of a generational gap, including legal aid and mediation, as well as organize educational programs for union members that encourage understanding and cooperation between different generations.



Živko Kulić

Prof. PhD Živko Kulić from the Faculty of Business Economics and Law, a professional mediator and arbitrator from Serbia, spoke on “The Right to Work For all Generations. Let’s Take a Step Towards a Society Without Marginalization.”

He also discussed ensuring a harmonious and productive working environment through social dialogue and collective agreements, the employer’s role, the trade union, and the worker himself. Speaking about the responsibility for realizing the right to work for all generations, **Professor Kulić** emphasized that the main factors that can contribute to it are the state, employers, trade unions, the media, universities, and scientific institutions. Regarding the role of the trade union in realizing the right to work for all generations, Kulić stated that the trade union must assert itself and prove itself as a critical factor every day and must not allow other subjects to exclude it from important social processes. Also, **Professor Kulić** emphasized the role of trade unions in shaping the organizational culture and climate. “The state of interpersonal and intergenerational relations mirrors the organizational culture, climate, justice, and human resources management system. It is necessary further to adjust the regulations and practices in this area, concluded **Kulić**. The seminar topics were important, especially for the trade union representatives, because the participants had the opportunity to learn about communication between generations. Communication between generations and the transfer of skills is very important for the process of inclusion of both groups in the labor market.

International round tables where participants from different countries had the opportunity to exchange valuable experiences on the topic “How trade unions can improve intergenerational communication and cooperation- Examples of good practice” gave special value to this seminar.



Marija Jovanović, Deputy president RS BOFOS



Through the workshop – to the goal!

A special, unusual workshop was organized for this seminar on Saturday, June 15. This workshop consisted of several activities. Some activities included intergenerational team competitions in sports such as darts, arm wrestling, and cooking. Apart from these sports activities aimed at developing intergenerational cooperation, understanding, and promotion of inclusivity and equality - an unusual activity - a workshop - was held: a treasure hunt.

The teams were divided into three groups of different ages and followed clues in the form of messages. By solving puzzles and “paying for mistakes in push-ups,” the teams searched for a special chest with sweets in the form of gold coins. The final task to achieve the goal was to put together a puzzle—a map of Serbia.





With a lot of fun, laughter, and creativity, they found a treasure—and a team made up of both young and older participants. Communication, socializing, and joint activities are the key to solving the intergenerational gap, and this workshop showed exactly this. What is important is that the activities were chosen to be accessible and interesting for all ages, which allowed us to establish excellent intergenerational cooperation and maximize team spirit!

That was the aim of the seminar. We look forward to reaching it completely!

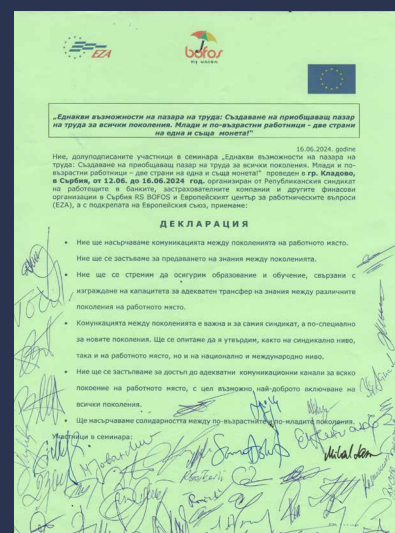
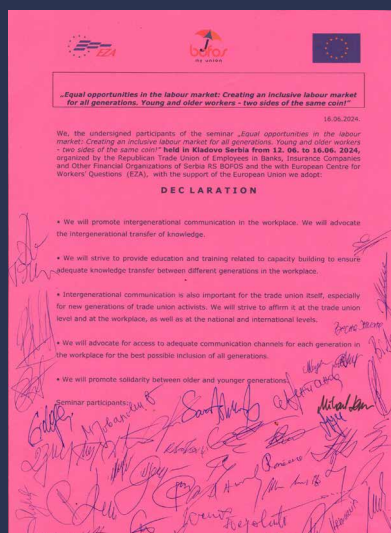
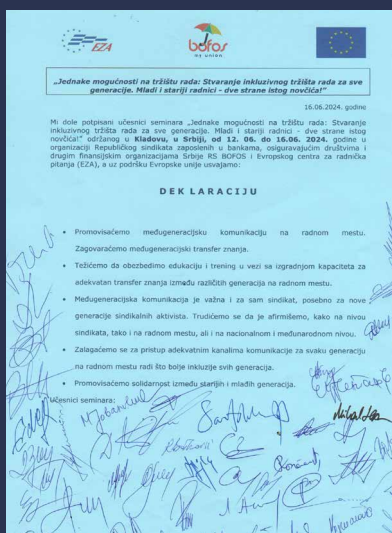
The most important thing is that we managed to raise the awareness of all seminar participants about the importance of an inclusive labor market and the need for equality for all generations in the professional environment.



WORKING ABOUT WORKERS' RIGHTS AND EDUCATION SINCE 1985



Seminar participants adopted a Declaration in which they emphasized that the trade unions should promote intergenerational communication in the workplace and advocate the intergenerational transfer of knowledge. They also noted that the trade unions should strive to provide education and training related to capacity building for adequate knowledge transfer between different generations in the workplace. They pointed out that intergenerational communication is also essential for the trade union itself, especially for new generations of trade union activists, and that trade unions will strive to affirm it, both at the trade union level and at the workplace, but also the national and international level. In the declaration, they also stated that they would advocate for access to adequate communication channels for each generation in the workplace for the best possible inclusion of all generations and promote solidarity between older and younger generations.





CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Seminar participants agreed that it is crucial to provide knowledge transfer between generations at the company and trade union, as well as on national levels, and especially at the European level. They also emphasized that it is necessary to understand the characteristics that define each generation and influence how those generations work, communicate, and react to changes in their work environment. They put particular emphasis on the fact that trade unions should be focused on communication between older and younger workers at all levels (company level, trade union itself, national and European level), as well as to know how each generation communicates and strive to provide each generation with the resources that are most relevant to them.

