

# ARITAKE-WILD

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations

"CEEC Social Partners' Participation in the European Social Dialogue:

*..... what are the social partner's needs?"*

PHASE TWO - FOLLOW-UP SEMINARS

Report of the Lithuanian National Seminar

Hotel Europa City, Vilnius  
Lithuania

25<sup>th</sup> May 2005

Prepared by ARITAKE-WILD  
May 2005

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## *Introduction*

The first in a series of follow-up national seminars designed to maximise the effectiveness of the participation of the new EU member states in European Social Dialogue was held in Lithuania on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2005. The objectives of the seminar were to:

- Review progress on the implementation of the action plans developed during phase one of the project;
- Identify and discuss any problems that had been encountered and propose ways to resolve them;
- Identify future “individual organisation” and “joint” priority actions for the Lithuanian social partners.

The seminar was attended by three out of 8 representatives designated by one of Lithuania’s employers’ organisations (LPK) and fifteen representatives from Lithuanian trade unions. The small enterprise and craft employers’ organisation (LVDK) did not designate the 8 representatives they were entitled to. Also in attendance were representatives from the European social partners UNICE, UEAPME and ETUC; and experts. The full attendance list for the seminar is attached as appendix one.

## *Methodology*

The seminar methodology built upon that used during the eight “two-day” CEEC national seminars. The one-day meeting format was designed with the objective of assuring maximum participation of the Lithuanian trade union and employer representatives. The contribution of the participants from the European social partner organisations and the experts was designed to promote focussed debate; to facilitate problem identification and resolution; and encourage action plan development. Detailed discussions were held in small working groups. Plenary feedback and review sessions involving all attendees were used to identify priorities and build consensus around

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actions. To further facilitate the generation and discussion of ideas and the development of future strategies, the seminar was conducted to the maximum extent possible in the Lithuanian language.

The seminar opened with formal presentations from the Lithuanian social partner organisations that summarised the actions they had taken to implement their “phase one” project actions. The seminar closed with the social partner organisations agreeing a revised series of “effectiveness improvement” actions to be implemented over the short to medium term. Between these sessions were working group discussions, plenary debate and a variety of formal and informal inputs from the European social partners

This report follows the format of the seminar agenda. It provides an overview report of each of the working sessions, and culminates in the agreed action plan developed at the end of the meeting. The detailed agenda for the meeting is included as appendix two but the working sessions making up the seminar can be summarised as follows:

Overview agenda		
Session one	Presentations by the national social partners	“Implementation of the phase one action plans.”
Session two	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future.”
Session three	Working group discussion and feedback	“Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities.”
Session four	Presentation by the European social partner organisations	“Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners.”
Session five	Concluding discussion	“Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues.”

***Report of the meeting***

*Session one - "Implementation of the phase one action plans."*

The phase one action plan of the Lithuanian trade unions included two points for action;

Lithuanian trade union phase one action plan

1. Establish a mechanism to bring together the views of the different trade union centres to aid in establishing common positions on European issues. It was envisioned that the process would involve the establishment of coordinators and the agreement of specific time schedules for review and approval.
2. Provide training and development for representatives including on the economic development of Lithuania, the European legal acquis, positive cooperation and negotiation practices.

To date the Lithuanian trade unions have undertaken the following initiatives to implement their action commitments:

- ◇ A mechanism for bringing together the views of the national trade union centres has been agreed upon;
- ◇ The Lithuanian government has been persuaded to assist with funding for national social partner representation in Brussels;
- ◇ A training manual on negotiating skills has been developed;
- ◇ Training sessions have already been held and more are planned

In addition to the initiatives taken to support the action plan the Lithuanian trade unions reported that they have:

- ◇ Raised awareness of the importance of social dialogue and the role of the social partners through public outreach for example in the form of conferences, leaflets and radio programmes;
- ◇ Improved the general level of communication and coordination between the three national trade union centres;

- ◇ Strengthened social partner relations through joint activities with the Lithuanian employers' organisations in the form of conferences, seminars, meetings and radio programmes.

In undertaking these actions, the trade unions noted the following constraints:

- ◇ Continuing low levels of trade union membership make it difficult to broaden both social dialogue and collective bargaining and place financial limitations on action;
- ◇ It remains difficult to engage with employers' organisations to the breadth and depth the trade unions would wish.

The phase one action plan of the Lithuanian employers' organisations included two points for action;

### Lithuanian employers' organisation phase one action plan

1. Propose at the March meetings of the Presidia of LPK and LVDK to establish a joint working group on European issues. Following the presidia discussions the two organisations will meet and agree upon follow-up items.
2. LPK and LVDK will explore the possibility of establishing representatives to Brussels to facilitate their work on EU issues and their contacts with EU players (Commission, Parliament, UNICE, UEAPME etc.)

The employer representatives present at the meeting reported mainly on national developments. Cooperation between employers and trade unions was happening in practice in the Tripartite Council even if it was not always possible to agree. The new labour code provided a basis to overcome the difficulty of collective bargaining at company level in a context of relatively low trade union affiliation by giving the right to works councils to do so. They reported that branch agreements were not developing for a variety of reasons. With regard to European issues, cooperation between LPK and LVDK should lead to the establishment of a joint representation office in Brussels, with financial support from the Lithuanian government.

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For information, the phase one action plan agreed in the joint working group was as follows;

1. Establish more regular informal contact between formal meetings, on European issues.
2. Arrange a joint seminar to review issues on the agenda of the European Social Dialogue with the attendance of ETUC, UNICE, UEAPME and CEEP.
3. On an individual basis: Make personal efforts to improve the human atmosphere during discussions; to understand the views and perspectives of the other side; and to identify common points rather than focusing on the differences.

*Session two - "The current European social dialogue agenda and likely priorities for the future."*

Liliane Volozinskis (UEAPME) made a formal presentation offering a brief outline of the history and evolution of European social dialogue; a description of the current social dialogue work programme; and an indication of probable future priorities. Her full presentation is included as appendix three.

*Session three – Working group discussions and feedback  
"Adapting and improving action plans in the light of experience and changing priorities."*

Due to the limited number of employer representatives it was not possible to form the "joint" working group that had been planned. The national representatives were divided into three working groups: Two "trade union groups"; and one "employers' organisation group". The representatives from UNICE and UEAPME joined the employers' organisation group; a representative from the ETUC together with one expert joined one trade union group; and the other representative from ETUC joined the second trade union group. A chairperson/rapporteur was selected by each group from amongst the national participants.

The working groups were given 90 minutes to consider the following questions:

*In the light of the plenary presentations - what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?*

*Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national/European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and the next 3 years?*

The following lists combine the issues raised in the working group presentations and in the “tour de table” discussion that followed them. The lists do not reflect any priority order or “multiple mentions” of issues. They simply indicate the issues raised and the order in which they were raised.

### **Trade union groups**

- Increase membership levels – with a focus on youth;
- Encourage more young people to engage in trade union activities;
  
- Build upon the improved communication and coordination between the three national trade union centres;
- Deepen inter-union cooperation at the branch and sectoral with respect to European level activities;
- Update the database of Lithuanian representatives at the EU level to consolidate information on who is available and with what expertise;
- Continue to train individuals to participate effectively at the EU level;
- Undertake the translation of key European documents;
- Spread information on EU good practices to members;
- Develop international (especially Baltic) networks and strengthen partnerships and alliances;
- Maximise the benefits that will emanate from government support for representation in Brussels.

### **Employers' Organisations Group**

- Continue cooperation in the Tripartite Council and improve collaboration with trade union counterparts;
- Maximise the benefits that will emanate from government support for representation in Brussels.

*Session four - "Actions to assist new member states social partner organisations already undertaken by the European social partners."*

In response to questions and needs expressed by the national social partners during the 2004 phase of the project the European level social partners have undertaken a range of activities to improve the effectiveness of the participation of new member states in the European social dialogue. Thérèse de Liedekerke of UNICE and Silvia Borbély of ETUC made presentations covering each of the following subjects:

- Resource centres – the European level social partners have established employer and trade union resource centres and launched web sites to promote their new services;
- Training and development assistance – assistance is available from the European social partners to facilitate staff development initiatives e.g. the funding of additional places at European level meetings for developmental purposes;
- Social partner competence development – a process by which individuals can be assessed against a series of "effective European social partner" competencies. The process will be "trial launched" in June in the Czech Republic.

The full presentations are included as appendices four and five.

*Session five - "Action plan revision based on agreed priority needs and issues."*

During the discussion of the working group reports in the context of the inputs during the day, it was agreed that the phase one action plans could be reviewed and updated in the light of experience to date. Any action plan emerging from the seminar should be both focused and achievable.



There was agreement of all parties to the following actions:

***Lithuanian Trade Union Action Plan***

- 1. Pool the human and material resources available to the three national centres to maximise impact at the European level;***
- 2. Focus upon the involvement and mobilisation of young people in the Lithuanian trade union movement;***
- 3. Develop further cooperative relationships between Lithuanian unions in the Baltic region countries;***
- 4. Improve training provision for social dialogue participants with a focus on language;***
- 5. Strive to develop stronger bilateral partnerships with employers;***
- 6. Maximise benefits from government funding for representation in Brussels.***

***Lithuanian Employers' Organisations Action Plan***

***Maximise benefits from government funding for representation in Brussels***

At the end of the meeting, thanks were offered to all those involved in the preparation and conduct of the seminar.

**List of Appendices**

Appendix one	Seminar attendance list
Appendix two	Seminar agenda (enclosed)
Appendix three	European Social Dialogue: Agenda and Priorities for the Future
Appendix four	European Social Dialogue: Employer's Support Tools
Appendix five	European Social Dialogue: Trade Union Support Tools
Appendix six	Agreed Action Plan from the Lithuanian Follow-Up Seminar 2005 (enclosed)

## APPENDIX TWO

## AGENDA

Joint Seminars of the European Social Partner Organisations "CEEC social participation in the European social dialogue: What are the social partners' needs?"

National Seminar LITHUANIA

Venue: Vilnius

Date: Wednesday 25 MAY 2005

0900 – 0930	Welcome, introductions and purpose of the day	A Wild in plenary
0930 - 1045	Pre-prepared presentations from the national trade unions, national employers and a national joint presentation;  "Report on the implementation of the action plan – the presentations should include what went well, what proved difficult, what we were unable to implement and why?"	Plenary session
1045 - 1100	Coffee Break	
1100 - 1145	European level social partner presentation on the likely European Social Dialogue agenda and priorities for the future	Plenary session
1145 - 1150	Briefing of working groups (employers, trade unions and joint)	A Wild in plenary
1150 - 1315	Three groups work on the questions:  "In the light of the plenary presentations – what are the most important learning points for the development of future action plans?"  "Based on our experience in implementing the action plans, and in the context of changing organisational and national / European priorities – what do we need to do in the next 12 months and in the next three years?"	Three working groups
1315 - 1445	Lunch Break	
1445 - 1530	Presentations from the working groups and questions on the proposed actions	Plenary session
1530 - 1615	Presentation by the EU social partners on the employers and trade union "support tools" and questions: 1. resource centres 2. training sessions 3. competence development project	Plenary session
1615 – 1630	Coffee Break	
1630 – 1715	General discussion on the possible content / priorities of future action plans following the presentations from working groups and the EU social partners	Plenary session
1715 – 1800	Consensus building session and agreement on the key issues and specific actions to be taken by trade unions and employers individually and jointly in the next 12 months and in the next three years	Plenary session
1800	closing remarks	Plenary session

APPENDIX SIX

AGREED ACTION PLAN FROM THE LITHUANIAN FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

Trade Unions	Employers' Organisations
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Pool the human and material resources available to the three national centres to maximise impact at the European level.</li> <li>2. Focus upon the involvement and mobilisation of young people in the Lithuanian trade union movement.</li> <li>3. Develop further cooperative relationships between Unions in the Baltic region countries.</li> <li>4. Improve training provision for social dialogue participants with a focus on language</li> <li>5. Strive to develop stronger bilateral partnerships with employer partners</li> <li>6. Maximise benefits from government funding for representation in Brussels</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Continue cooperation in the Tripartite Council and improve collaboration with trade union counterparts;</li> <li>2. Maximise benefits from government funding for representation in Brussels</li> </ol>