ARITAKE-WILD

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations;

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

.... what are the social partners needs? "

Report of the Slovakian National Seminar
Topol'cianky
Slovakia
29th and 30th January 2004

Prepared by ARITAKE-WILD
February 2004

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The first of a series of five national seminars designed to identify the organisational and individual characteristics that will enable the participants to participate effectively in the European Social Dialogue was held in Slovakia on 29th and 30th January 2004. The objectives for the Slovakian social partners during the two-day event were;

> ➢ To identify the characteristics of organisations and individuals that will contribute most effectively to the European Social Dialogue;

> ➢ To develop individual social partner organisation and joint action plans to prepare for their full participation in the European Social Dialogue process after accession on 1st May 2004.

The seminar was attended by representatives of Slovakian employers' organisations and trade unions; representatives from the European social partners UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP and ETUC; and experts.   The full attendance list for the seminar is attached as appendix one.

The seminar methodology was designed to assure maximum participation of the Slovakian trade unions and employers with "added value" input from the participants from the European social partner organisations and the experts. Most of the event involved discussions in small working groups with regular plenary feedback forums and consensus building sessions. To further facilitate the generation and development of ideas and strategies, the working groups were conducted in the Slovakian language with "subtle" interpretation available to the European social partner participants and experts. Full interpretation was provided in the plenary sessions.

Additionally, and in order to maximise bipartite discussion, agreement and action planning, where discussions took place in working groups, three groups were used: One contained exclusively trade union representatives; a second contained exclusively

employers' organisation representatives and the third group was of "mixed" composition. The outputs of all three groups were presented and discussed in plenary.

Day one of the seminar was devoted to identifying the most important characteristics, actions and behaviours that will lead to a successful entry into the European Social Dialogue for the Slovakian social partners. Through successive combinations of working groups, feedback forums, expert input and consensus building sessions, the participants were encouraged to develop a short list of key issues that they believed would have to be addressed. Day two was devoted to the development of individual social partner and joint action plans for each priority issue that will speed the transition and maximise the effectiveness of the Slovakian social partners in the European Social Dialogue.

This report follows the format of the seminar agenda, providing an overview report of each of the eight working sessions, and culminating in the agreed action plan that was the outcome of the final working session. The detailed agenda for the meeting is included as appendix two but the eight working sessions making up the seminar can be summarised as follows;

	Outline session content	Nature of the session
Session one	"Explaining the European Social Dialogue".	Expert input - plenary
Session two	"Building successful organisations and individuals for European Social Dialogue".	Working groups
Session three	Working group feedback. "Building successful organisations and individuals for European Social Dialogue".	Plenary presentations
Session four	"Successful social partners and successful meetings" – presentation of research findings.	Expert input - plenary
Session five	"The characteristics, actions and behaviours that contribute to successful engagement in social partnership".	Consensus building session – plenary.
Session six	"Action plan development on the agreed priority issues"	Working groups
Session seven	Working group feedback. "Action plan development on the agreed priority issues"	Plenary presentations
Session eight	Discussion and agreement on specific action plans	Consensus building session – plenary.

DAY ONE (29ᵗʰ January)

Session one (Expert input)

Explaining the European Social Dialogue

The history, evolution, participants, working rules, practices and priorities of the European Social Dialogue were summarised in formal presentations given by one of the seminar experts (Alan Wild) and the UNICE Director of Social Affairs (Thérèse de Liederkerke). These presentations are attached as appendices three and four respectively. Additionally, each of the representatives of the European social partners; Juliane Bir of ETUC; Lilliane Volozinskis of UEAPME; and Inge Reichert of CEEP commented briefly on the similarities and differences in the approaches of their respective organisations to the development of negotiating positions, the sign-off process for agreements and methods of communication and implementation.

At the end of session one, the Slovakian social partners were left with a series of specific questions for consideration during the course of the seminar;

> ➢ How will they organise member discussions and convey input to consultations?

> ➢ How will they prepare technical input for negotiating mandates?

> ➢ How will they get this mandate approved?

> ➢ How will they liaise with each other?

> ➢ How will they explain compromises to members?

> ➢ How will they organise follow up procedures?

Session two (Working group activity)

"Building successful organisations and individuals for European Social Dialogue"

The national representatives were divided into three working groups. Two thirds of the trade union representatives formed the "trade union group"; two thirds of the employers formed the "employers' organisation group" and the remaining one third of the total population formed the "joint group".   The representatives from UNICE and UEAPME, together with one expert, joined the employers' organisation group; the representative from the ETUC together with one expert joined the trade union group; and the representative from CEEP together with one expert joined the "joint group". A

chairperson/rapporteur was designated for each group from the list of national participants.

The working groups were given two hours to consider the following questions;

> *What do we need to do to build successful social dialogue partner organisations at the national level that are capable of contributing effectively to the European Social Dialogue? (Trade union and employers' organisation groups)*

> *What are the actions and behaviours that will make our meetings together as successful as possible? (Joint group)*

Session three (Working group feedback)

"Building successful organisations and individuals for European Social Dialogue"

The report back from the three groups covered the following issues;

Trade Union Group

❖ Improvement in the quality and professionalism of trade unions and representatives in order to gain more authority;

❖ Improvement in the structure of trade unions to facilitate the reaching of agreement;

❖ Developing a link to the other social partners and building a mechanism to achieve a unified mandate, defining the problem and providing a concrete solution;

❖ Establishing clear timelines and identifying and nominating responsible negotiators;

❖ Establishing procedure for reviewing negotiating opinions and to build consensus;

❖ Investment in education, especially languages. The trade unions should use young people who already have the language skills necessary;

❖ Prepare for changes associated with new structures and new dialogue;

❖ Improve mutual relations between the Slovakian social partners ....., meetings like this bring partners together in a cultivated manner

Employers' Organisation Group

- ❖ Goodwill of actors is necessary to create a positive environment for dialogue;
- ❖ Both tripartite dialogue and bipartite dialogues have to be involved. The role of the state as a major employer has to be considered;
- ❖ Need to improve the way small and medium sized enterprises are represented at all levels;
- ❖ Need to prepare delegates that will be representing employers' organisations.

Joint Group

- ❖ Need to have social dialogue of a bipartite and tripartite nature;
- ❖ Determine what point the government becomes involved … and with what role;
- ❖ Find financial resources to support the structures;
- ❖ Social dialogue must actively involve SMEs;
- ❖ Establish learning process;
- ❖ Focus on common positions;
- ❖ Determine implementation process for voluntary agreements;
- ❖ Improve communication structures;
- ❖ Determine how to involve the "third sectors" – the government as an employer and civil society;
- ❖ Evaluate competitive environment of accession countries vs. "old" Europe;
- ❖ Bipartite dialogue needs to be launched quickly;
- ❖ Government needs to create an atmosphere for good social dialogue;
- ❖ Create a structured implementation and engagement programme;
- ❖ Ensure government stabilises, not changes the legal framework for social dialogue;
- ❖ Improve consultation between the social partners;
- ❖ Economic policy issues should be discussed at the bipartite level; (e.g. wage policy);
- ❖ Eliminate personal animosities, improve mutual understanding, trust and goodwill

Session four (Expert input)

"Successful social partners and successful meetings" – presentation of research findings

One of the seminar experts (Alan Wild) presented the findings from a small research project conducted specifically for this series of national seminars. 14 currently active members of the European Social Dialogue, eight trade union members and six employer members, from the "European 15" were asked the following questions relating to the organisational characteristics of "more" and "less" successful organisations and the actions and behaviours of "more" and "less" successful individuals.

> *Could you tell me, in your experience, what are the characteristics of the successful social partner at the European level? Could you list three or four characteristics of successful social partner organisations ?*
>
> *Could you tell me, in your experience, what are the characteristics of the least successful social partners at the European level. Could you list three or four characteristics of the least successful social partner organizations?*
>
> *Turning now to behaviours. Can you tell me what are the most important actions and behaviours that make **individuals** more or less successful in the European social dialogue?*
>
> *Are there any behaviours or actions that make particular **national delegations** (employers and trade unions together) more or less successful?*

The purpose of this session was to allow the participants to review their own discussions and presentations from session three and four in the context of the knowledge and experience of individuals from different countries that had participated in the European Social Dialogue over a number of years.   The full presentation is attached to this report as appendix five.

In summary, the following factors were identified in the research.

Characteristics of the "most successful" social partner organisations	Characteristics of "less successful" social partner organisations
√ Social dialogue is taken seriously; √ One or two individuals given clear responsibility for the social dialogue; √ Continuity of representation; √ Representatives are credible at the national level; √ Strong links between national and international activities; √ Clear process for mandate development; √ Clear process for reporting back; √ Processes for implementing agreements; √ Dedication of sufficient resources – admin, research and IT; √ Permanent Brussels presence.	× Lack of priority or interest in the social dialogue; × Lack of clarity in who represents the organisation; × Lack of delegation of authority – too many referrals to national HQ; × Low credibility – nationally or at the European level; × Changes in representation from meeting to meeting; × Lack of processes for producing a clear mandate, reporting back or implementation; × Over-political organisations/stances – lack of independence, influence of "party politics"; × Poor electronic communication media; × Lack of visibility in Brussels.
Actions/Behaviours of the "most successful" individuals	Actions/Behaviors of "less successful" individuals
√ Interested in and motivated by subject; √ Preparedness to research and learn; √ Patience!; √ Language skills; √ Good listening skills; √ Working outside of the formal meetings – 10% inside, 90% outside; √ Strong networker; √ Cultural awareness and sensitivity; √ Awareness of other country conditions; √ Awareness of views of other national social partner; √ Strong IT skills; √ "European" thinking.	× No experience in collective bargaining; × Lack of language skills; × Lack of interest; × Political operators; × Dishonesty; × Nationalistic approaches; × Speaking to get their names in the minutes; × Internet illiterate; × Poor networker; × Inability to work effectively outside formal meetings; × Lack of closeness to the other national social partner; × "9 to 5" workers.

Session five (Consensus building session)

The characteristics, actions and behaviours that contribute to successful engagement in social partnership.

Each individual was asked to consider, in the light of sessions four and five, what they considered to be the most important issues to have emerged. During a "tour de table" exercise involving the national participants, each issue raised was noted "on-screen" and the following "long-list" of issues was the result. The list below is exactly that recorded in the meeting. It is not in any priority order and reflects only the order in which the subjects were mentioned. It does not reflect "multiple mentions" of issues.

❖ NATIONAL BIPARTITE SOCIAL DIALOGUE
❖ RESOURCES
❖ AGENDA FOR DIALOGUE
❖ EDUCATION AND PREPAREDNESS OF SOCIAL PARTNERS TO PARTICIPATE IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE
❖ KNOWLEDGE OF EUROPEAN ISSUES
❖ LANGUAGE TRAINING – INFORMATION SHARING
❖ INFORMATION SHARING
❖ GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SOCIAL DIALOGUE
❖ STRENGTHENING OF EMPLOYER UNITY
❖ INVOLVEMENT OF YOUNGER PEOPLE
❖ FIND WAYS OF GETTING OLD EUROPE TO UNDERSTAND NEEDS OF NEW EUROPE
❖ FIND WAYS OF GETTING A PRESENCE IN EUROPE - FOR BOTH PARTIES
❖ MESSAGE TO GOVT – STRENGTHEN NOT WEAKEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE
❖ RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN SOCIAL DIALOGUE
❖ TRANSFER OF ISSUES FROM NATIONAL LEVEL TO EUROPE
❖ ACCEPTANCE OF THE OUTCOMES OF DIALOGUE IN PRACTICE
❖ UNIFICATION OF SLOVAKIAN SYSTEM OF SOCIAL DIALOGUE – EU INFLUENCE TO GIVE OPPORTUNITIES TO CENTRE AND EAST
❖ PROFESSIONALISM, ETHICAL PRINCIPLES
❖ ROLE OF THIRD EMPLOYER – THE STATE – TRIPARTISM
❖ INCLUSION OF SMEs IN THE PROCESS – SECTOR, REGIONS AND NATIONAL
❖ EUROPEAN UNION NEEDS TO PREPARE AND TO GIVE MORE HELP TO ACCESSION COUNTRIES
❖ MAKE SOCIAL DIALOGUE A REALITY IN SMALL BUSINESSES
❖ COMPANY REPRESENTATION
❖ THIRD SECTOR – PARTICIPATION – COOPERATIVES
❖ IMPLEMENTATION OF EXISTING ACQUIS AT NATIONAL LEVEL
❖ COOPERATION WITH ORGANSATIONS WITH OFFICES OF TRADE UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS IN BRUSSELS
❖ FAST AND EFFICIENT INFORMATION PROVISION IN SLOVAKIAN LANGUAGE
❖ HOW TO ENGAGE NON ORGANISED EMPLOYERS
❖ SETTING EFFECTIVE PRIORITIES
❖ ADVANCING INTERESTS OF OTHER GROUPS – CONSUMERS, RETIRED PEOPLE, ETC

Following the national participant "tour de table", the experts were asked to give their views on what they considered to be the most important priorities for the Slovakian social partners. In this short session, the experts and European level social partners made the following points;

➢ The accession countries were joining a moving train. It was important that they move quickly to resolve the issues raised and prioritise those matters that would facilitate a rapid and smooth entry transition;

➢ There is no single "most successful" model of national social dialogue. Slovakia should develop arrangements best suited to it's own national context;

➢ The existing European Social Dialogue members have to consider the current European Social Dialogue agenda to facilitate the entry of the accession countries;

➢ The only way that "new Europe" will effectively influence "old Europe" is if the accession countries set clear objectives and plan their interventions well;

➢ For Slovakia, although the tripartite social dialogue is an important institution with a clear role, the development of a strong and autonomous bipartite social dialogue is equally important and will contribute to improved effectiveness of tripartite discussions.

Following this general discussion, each of the national participants was asked to select three issues from the above "long-list" that they wished to spend the following day working on. This more focused "tour de table" produced consensus on five broad areas;

Resources	Financial, Brussels representation, IT, administration, staffing levels;
People Development	Education, training, language skills, negotiating skills, professionalism;
Institutional Fit	National social dialogue, representation of SMEs, trust, mutual recognition;
Future Influence	Implementation of acquis. Mandate and implementation mechanisms;
Information Flows	Securing adequate levels of information in usable form. Assuring effective member communication.

Overnight the broad areas were converted into specific task descriptions and translated for the working groups.

DAY TWO (30th January)

Session six   (Working groups)

Action plan development

Three working groups; again one trade union group, one employers' group and one joint group, were given three hours to develop responses to the following questions;

For your organization (or jointly) develop a specific action plan to address each of the following issues;

1.   Identify the financial resources necessary to enable us to participate effectively in the European Social Dialogue and ways to secure them;

2.   Outline education and training plans for your organisations, members and those participating directly in the European Social Dialogue process;

3.   Define a process for national social dialogue and plans to assure representativeness; member and government recognition of authority; and mutual respect and trust with the other social partner;

4.   How will you develop your group mandate to be taken to the European Social Dialogue and how will you communicate and implement its results?

5.   How can you obtain information on social dialogue activities in a regular and usable form for the use of your organisation and members?

Keep in mind when discussing topics: Gender mainstreaming and engagement of young people

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For each group, a working group chairperson/rapporteur was appointed and the experts were divided amongst the groups in a similar manner to session three above.

Session seven (Working group feedback)

Action plan development

The working groups found it difficult within the allocated timescale to address all five subjects adequately. Each of them chose to focus on questions one through three (resources; education and training; and national social dialogue) and in the process of these discussions found that they began to address many of the issues contained in questions five and six (mandates and implementation; and information).

The group rapporteurs presented the following feedback from their working sessions;

Joint Group

National social dialogue
❖ Use existing structure already in tripartite structure, create the bipartite using the same representatives without the government. Consider using representatives currently working on existing European level committees e.g. ECOSOC;
❖ Terms of reference – discussion of and agreement where possible on common approaches to European agenda; discussion of, and agreement where possible on issues on the agenda of the tripartite social dialogue; implementation of agreements reached at the European level; domestic social dialogue issues;
❖ Arrangements should be put in place before the end of March.

Resources
❖ Financing can be found through membership fees;
❖ Slovakian government may be persuaded to contribute to certain specific issues e.g. core administration, Brussels office, etc;
❖ Explore further use of European funds— including short term financing of a Brussels presence;
❖ Look to ILO for financial support for jointly developed projects.

Education and training
❖ Joint education on certain topics common to both groups, the basic task is to define these common topics. Member education programmes might attract external funding;
❖ Language skills need to be developed, potentially through the use of young people. One method is to base young people with language skills in Brussels to act as permanent delegate and host to visiting experts

Employers' Group

National social dialogue
- ❖ Make the position of social dialogue active rather than passive.
- ❖ Look to redrafting legislation and potential lobbying of the Slovak government;

Resources
- ❖ Actions could be taken to secure finance through the members or through government aid;

Education and training
- ❖ Utilise internships for people with language skills to be involved in bipartite and tripartite process and build networks/personal relations;
- ❖ Reactivate an existing cross employers' organisation committee to provide knowledge of what links and relationships already exist and make best use of them for the group as a whole.

Trade Union Group

Resources
- ❖ Must take into account current and long term perspective in terms of financing;
- ❖ Financing could be raised through membership fee allocations and social funds;
- ❖ Potential for allocation from state budget and European funding through grants and joint projects between national social partners focusing on social dialogue. An action item could include establishing a team that would draft project proposal;

Education and training
- ❖ Education and training issue is partially already resolved for the trade unions within the current trade union training institute. Action has already been taken to provide sessions on European issues from the lowest to highest level;
- ❖ In terms of social dialogue, language is the most important element and could perhaps be addressed in part through internships;

National social dialogue
- ❖ National Social Dialogue has existed for the past ten years. Ruling coalition however sometimes ignores social partners opinions. There is not an official framework for bipartite dialogue but it does function nonetheless. There is further space for development in terms of representation of SMEs.

Session eight (Consensus building session)

Action plan development

During the discussion of the working group reports in plenary session, it was agreed that action plans could be developed for three of the five priority issues. Within the action plans on resources, training and development and the national social dialogue, actions would be included to cover the questions of mandate/implementation and information provision and flows.   These action plans should divide responsibility between the four groups present at the seminar; the trade unions; the employers' organisations; jointly by the national social partners and jointly by the European level social partner organisations.

It was agreed that the formal action plan emerging from the seminar should be both focused and achievable. It was noted that many of the ideas contained in the working materials above are worthy of follow-up and should not be lost.

There was agreement of all parties to the following actions;

Resources			
Trade unions	*Employers' organisations*	*Joint action by national social partners*	*European level social partners*
Examine reallocation of current financial resources at the national level to reflect change in work balance towards European activity; Explore options for increased financing through existing and new members.	Conduct comprehensive inventory of available people/people already working on European issues in each organisation; Maximise use of these individuals for the benefit of the whole group; Explore options for increased financing through existing and new members.	Request government funding for; o Specific social dialogue projects; o Core administrative infrastructure for social dialogue ; o Office facilities in Brussels. Explore project funding at EU level and with ILO for social dialogue projects.	UNICE, UEAPME, CEEP, ETUC to make joint approach to European Commission for the funding of a presence in Brussels; Provide aid in identifying EU budget lines where funding for national social dialogue initiatives might be possible;

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Education and training

Trade unions	Employers' organisations	Joint action by national social partners	European level social partners
Continue to readjust current education programmes run by the Slovakian trade union institute to provide additional focus on European issues; Explore use of internships to bolster language competence of young people.	Focus education and training resources on those individuals identified through the "network" exercise described above.	Through EU or government funding, build presence in Brussels. Use young people with language skills as permanent delegates and to host visiting experts; Identify education/training project to access European funding and help build skills	Assist in identification and acquisition of EU funding for appropriate projects.

National Social Dialogue

Trade unions	Employers' organisations	Joint action by national social partners	European level social partners
Consider membership of national social dialogue from the point of view of representivity of Slovakian workers.	Consider membership of national social dialogue from the point of view of representivity of Slovakian employers – including SMEs.	Current tripartite system should remain and its effectiveness enhanced by the development of national bipartite social dialogue; The bipartite national structure should be based on trade union and employer representatives in current tripartite structure;	

		People already active in European committees should be also considered; Terms of reference for national social dialogue to include; o discussion of and agreement where possible on common approaches to European agenda; o discussion of, and agreement where possible on issues on the agenda of the tripartite social dialogue; o implementation of agreements reached at the European level; o domestic social dialogue issues; Before the end of March there should be a discussion between the national employers and trade unions to agree national social dialogue structure, terms of reference, operating procedures and launch.	

The meeting ended with the general agreement that a lot had been accomplished in a very short period of time. Not only had a soundly thought through series of actions been agreed upon, but the meeting itself had helped cement positive relationships between the national social partners in a very constructive way. Thanks were offered to all those involved in the preparation and conduct of the seminar.

AGENDA

Joint Project of the European Social Partner Organisations:
"CEEC social partners' participation in the European social dialogue:
What are Social Partners' Needs?"

National Seminar No. 1
Venue: Hotel Národný Dom, Topolcianky, Slovakia
Date :   29th and 30th January 2003

DAY ONE
Thursday 29th January

0900 - 0930	Registration		
0930 - 1000	Introductions and welcome	Plenary	
1000 - 1045	"Explaining the European Social Dialogue"	Plenary	Mr. Alan Wild
1045 - 1100	Coffee break		
1100 - 1300	Three concurrent work groups; Group 1 "What do we need to do to build successful social dialogue partner organisations at the national level that are capable of contributing effectively to the European social dialogue?" – trade union group. Group 2 "What do we need to do to build successful social dialogue partner organisations at the national level that are capable of contributing effectively to the European social dialogue?" – employer group Group 3 "What are the actions and behaviours that will make our meetings together as successful a possible?" - joint trade union and employer group.	Work Groups	
1300 - 1400	Lunch break		
1400 - 1500	Feedback from Groups 1,2 and 3	Plenary	
1500 - 1515	Coffee break		
1515 - 1600	Presentation of research; "Successful social partners and successful meetings – learning from experience	Plenary	Mr. Alan Wild
1600 - 1800	General discussion and agreement on the characteristics, actions and behaviours that contribute to our successful engagement in social partnership	Plenary	

1800	Close and any announcements	Plenary	
	Evening Program in accordance with announcements		

DAY TWO
Friday 30th January

0900 – 1200 Coffee to be taken at 1030	Three concurrent work groups; Group 4 "Based upon yesterday's conclusions – what are the issues we need to work on to make our organisations as effective as possible in the European level Social Dialogue? What specific actions do we need to take?" – trade union group. Group 5 "Based upon yesterday's conclusions – what are the issues we need to work on to make our organisations as effective as possible in the European level Social Dialogue? What specific actions do we need to take?" – employer group Group 6 "Based upon yesterday's conclusions - what are the issues we need to work on to make our involvement in the European Social Dialogue a success? What specific actions do we need to take?" - joint trade union and employer group.	Work Groups	
1200 - 1300	Feedback from groups 4,5 and 6	Plenary	
1300 - 1400	Lunch		
1400 – 1630 Coffee to be taken at 1500	Discussion and agreement on the key issues and the specific actions to be taken by the trade unions and employers individually and jointly.	Plenary	
1630 - 1700	Closing remarks	Plenary	