

# **FIRST THE HUMAN BEING – LATER THE PROFIT**

## **The Newsletter of the Sixth Congress**

of the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions



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**No 2**, 20 May 2006,

### **ADDRESS BY JOHN MONKS GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE EUROPEAN TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION**

I am pleased to convey the greetings of the ETUC to the Congress of our newest ETUC affiliate, the OPZZ.

It has been a long process. I have appreciated OPZZ' s support for ETUC activities and demonstrations in the past and look forward to a close relationship in future. European trade unionism - and Polish trade unionism can only benefit from a strong united Polish voice at European level. This is all the more important now that Poland has taken its rightful place as a leading nation in the European Union.

Since then, many things, growth rates in particular and average living standards, have improved. Other things, particularly growing inequality and insecurity, have not.

None of these features are unique to Poland. All member states feel the same pressures to varying degrees. But for the new member states, the combination of rapid improvement in some areas with painful adjustments in others is especially acute.

The EU was established as a *peace* process in Western Europe to repair the ravages of the Second World War; and to make European wars impossible in future.

It went on to become a *prosperity* process - an initiative which to date has been remarkably successful.

When poor countries have joined the EU, they have

closed the gaps rapidly on their richer neighbours. Italy first, and now, spectacularly, Ireland and Spain, have made huge strides. That is our hope, that is our expectation, with the countries like yours, which joined in 2004.

In the meantime, it is important for everyone to recognise the success of the EU enlargement in 2004.

Many in Western Europe have been worried by the emigration of jobs to poorer countries and the immigration of cheap labour.

Yet, while there are undoubtedly losers among the workers in the old EU, there are winners too, just as there are in the new member states. The new dynamic markets of Central and Eastern Europe are providing attractive opportunities. The balance of trade has actually moved in favour of the older member states. So higher growth rates in the East encourage a boost in exports for the West.

Free movement of labour too is having an increasing and mainly positive effect. The ETUC has opposed a continuation of the transitional arrangements used by some countries to impede free movement arguing that free movement is one of the founding principles of the EC.

Everyone should have the right to work and live in any EU country. This is based on four conditions - equal pay and conditions; respect for national collective bargaining systems; equal access to social security and effective monitoring and enforcement.

If you try to interfere with this right to free movement, you drive migrant work to the black economy. You make it vulnerable to exploitation and second class treatment. You undermine your own systems.



When I was General Secretary of the British TUC, we decided not to ask the British Government for transitional arrangements, and the UK has been open to all EU labour. So far it has been a win-win situation with many citizens of Poland working there on equal terms with the British.

I am pleased that Sweden, Ireland and the UK have now been joined by Spain, Finland, Greece and Portugal in ending transitional arrangements.

Finally, I would like to thank OPZZ for its support on the proposed Bolkestein Directive, most recently on the streets of Strasbourg. Bolkestein's "country of origin principle" was fundamentally flawed. The idea that an outside company could go, say, to Germany and observe the laws of its own country, not those of Germany, was a recipe for communal strife and conflict.

Let me give a Western European example. France has tough laws on maximum working time, the UK doesn't. If a British company wins a contract in France, could it, under Bolkestein, have tendered for jobs in France on the basis of long British working hours? We think it could - and the result would have been a major and divisive controversy.

We want a Services Directive - one based on equal treatment of domestic and foreign companies alike but based on the principle of "when in Rome, do as the Romans do", not on a country of origin principle. I hope we can persuade the Polish government. We need your help and the help of Solidarność as the Polish Government still seem to support the original Bolkestein idea of country of origin.

For that, and other expressions and acts of support, I thank the OPZZ for your solidarity and support. I pledge today to reciprocate that support to Polish trade unionism in the days, weeks and years ahead.

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## INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE

In the course of the Congress a seminar was held on social dialogue issues. The guests of the Congress could get acquainted with the Polish structures and mechanisms of dialogue at the national and sectoral level and then they presented their respective experience in this field. The Deputy President of OPZZ, Ryszard Łepik, starting the discussion, emphasised the fact that representatives of OPZZ were asking the European trade unionists for advice and for indication of good social dialogue practice while starting their works on the new Social Pact in Poland. On the Polish side the seminar was attended by Alicja Milewska, a member of the Tripartite Commission, Janusz Gołąb, a secretary of this Commission and OPZZ representatives in EU advisory bodies. Colleague Janusz Gołąb presented the rules of procedure and experience of the Polish Tripartite Commission for Socio-Economic Issues, as well as some of complex problems that social partners are not able to cope with. A representative of the Portuguese trade union federation, Fernando Mauricio, described the rules of procedure and experience of dialogue structures in his country, paying special attention to the role of the Economic and Social Council. He mentioned the threat that the Portuguese trade union movement was able to eliminate - an attempt at replacing bilateral collective bargaining (also sectoral) with a formula of tripartite dialogue at a central level. This threat has been eliminated, however in 2003 the government introduced unfavourable for employees labour law provisions which weakened the collective agreements' system. Representatives of the Hungarian trade union federation, Peter Pataky and

Karoly Gyorgy described the functioning of the social dialogue at the central level and in 33 sectoral committees. In the latter segment partners have reached a considerable progress in finding a bilateral consensus. Alicja Milewska presented the relationship between the dialogue at a central level and the sectoral dialogue, showing an example of the health care sector in Poland.

Representatives of the Spanish trade union federation - Isabel Cano and Francisco Soriano - presented the review of mechanisms of social dialogue from the perspective of the recent 10 years. Of particular interest was a comparison of 8-year experience in cooperation with the right-wing government with the last 2 years of dialogue with the socialist government. Participants of the meeting had an opportunity to get acquainted with the underlying principles of the new social pact, negotiated with the government and with the employers, whose text has been delivered to the Polish party. Spanish guests underlined that the social dialogue is effective only when there is political will to achieve specific effects or when employees are well organised and determined to carry out effective actions. A representative of Greek trade unions, Pechlivanidi Evangelia, described the rules of functioning of the only trade union central organisation - the Labour Confederation, in the national social dialogue system. The system is linked with the structure of general collective agreement, concluded for 2 years and sectoral agreements based on this general agreement. A special problem is connected with signing an agreement for a large group of migrant workers in Greece - about 2.5 million persons. The representatives of Slovak and Turkish trade union federations also shared their experience with participants of the meeting. Vladimir Mojs, deputy president of the Confederation of Slovak Trade Unions mentioned the similarities between Slovak system and social dialogue system in Poland. Ugras Gok from the Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions indicated the weakness of social dialogue in the private sector, where the trade union rate is very low. He mentioned an additional problem that was connected with joining trade unions. J. Gołąb thanked participants for sharing their experience in the field of social dialogue in their respective countries. He indicated the necessity of further cooperation and experience exchange within the framework of the European Trade Union Confederation that OPZZ has recently joined.

The seminar had a form of a free workshop. It was a good opportunity for exchange of information but also for sharing concrete, „hot” experience. The debate may be very valuable for planning the work of branch trade unions in the Polish structures of dialogue and - as the foreign participants emphasised - was a very interesting proposal of organisers.

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## NEW DEPUTY PRESIDENTS OF OPZZ

**Franciszek Bobrowski, Andrzej Radzikowski, Wiesława Taranowska**

The following have been proposed to the posts of deputy presidents: Franciszek Bobrowski, Jan Kisieliński, Ryszard Łepik, Andrzej Radzikowski, Wiesława Taranowska.

Out of 318 delegates with the right to vote 276 persons voted (275 valid votes). The following persons have been elected:

Franciszek Bobrowski - 156 votes; Jan Kisieliński - 94 votes; Ryszard Łepik - 110 votes; Andrzej Radzikowski, - 143 votes; Wiesława Taranowska. - 186 votes.