

## **Pan-European Regional Council, activities report 2015-2018**

The general context in the region continued to be characterised by uncertainty and rising pressure on trade unions, labour and social rights. The main PERC activities include pan-European debates at statutory meetings, summer schools and thematic forums, support to targeted sub-regional activities and national actions in South-Eastern Europe (SEE) and Newly Independent States (NIS) via offices in Sarajevo and Moscow.

### **General Assembly and Executive Committee**

The [PERC Executive Committee](#) (10 March 2015, Brussels) discussed ITUC frontline priorities: global supply chains, minimum living wages and formalising informal work, eliminating slavery and forced labour, climate justice and industrial transformation, and ITUC organising academies activities. It also debated European Union Eastern Partnership policies.

In May 2015, following the elections of the European Trade Union Confederation General Secretary, Luca Visentini took the office of the PERC General Secretary from Bernadette Segol.

The [3<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly](#) (15 December 2015, Brussels) approved the activities report for period 2011-2015, debated the programme for the next period and elected the new leadership team. The programme document focuses on five key areas: peace, democracy and stability in Europe; the next stage of the crisis/transformation in Europe: labour market, social policy and the challenges associated to migration; confronting rising and multiple inequalities; safeguarding labour and social rights, genuine social dialogue and collective bargaining - instruments for market correction, not for competition; organising and organisational development - the way to real power.

The PERC Assembly elected Irakli Petriashvili, leader of the Georgian Trade Union Confederation, as the PERC President. It also elected eight Vice-Presidents to form a balanced and committed leadership team to guide the PERC programme implementation and to support the President and the General Secretary (Ana Maria Corral, UGT, Spain, Erich Foglar, OeGB, Austria, Marija Hanzevacki, NHS, Croatia, Nataliya Levitska, KVPU, Ukraine, Sattar Mehbaliyev, AHIK, Azerbaijan, Ellen Nygren, LO, Sweden, Mikhail Shmakov, FNPR, Russia, Anna Wolanska, NSZZ Solidarnosc, Poland).

The [PERC Executive Committee](#) (Brussels, 21 March 2016) agreed upon the main priorities for PERC actions in 2016: migration and multinational enterprises. Special attention was given to the attacks against trade unionists in Turkey and general shrinking of democratic space in this country, and EU European Neighbourhood policy and opportunities for unions to contribute to it.

The [PERC Executive Committee](#) (Brussels, 19 April 2017) debated issues of migration, supply chains, trade union rights situation in some of European countries, violence at work standard setting process and ILO European regional meeting, as well as European Eastern Partnership policies.

The [PERC Executive Committee](#) (Brussels, 6 March 2018) focused on wage divergence promoted by models of organising business and production practiced by multi-national enterprises and some governments that create “exceptional incentives” for businesses to relocate their production to the Eastern countries. Having debated trade union rights situation in Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan and some other countries, the PERC Executive Committee agreed that the situation in Kazakhstan is an extreme degradation and challenge to

the international trade union movement principles in the region. The Committee also discussed the reviewed European Union Eastern Partnership policies and Western Balkans strategy.

### **Women's Committee**

The PERC Women's conference takes place every four years and elects the PERC Women's committee for a four-year mandate. The [fourth PERC women's committee](#) was elected in Tbilisi, Georgia, 20 October 2016. Its programme prioritises the promotion of equal treatment and the fight to eliminate gender pay and pension gaps, need to tackle challenges related to work-life balance, campaigning for the right to a decent living wage sufficient to cover basic needs, women in decision making positions in trade unions at all levels and the fight against violence at work.

The women's committee meets twice a year. In addition, it runs specific activities and forums, such as women's school, or thematic priority meetings, e.g.: [Count Us In campaign](#) (Brussels, 5-6 November 2015), [Women in informal economy](#) (Kobuleti, 15-17 September 2015), [Fight against violence](#) (Budapest, 23-25 May 2017).

The [PERC Women's School](#) (Jahorina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 26-27 September 2018) focused on campaigning for ending violence and harassment against women and men at the workplace, lobbying for an ILO Convention supplemented by a Recommendation, tackling the gender pay gap and pension gap.

Young women's meetings in [Tallinn](#) (15-16 October 2014) and [Berlin](#) (20-21 June 2018) debated current Trade Union strategies and policies to address issues facing women, and especially young women, in the world of work.

### **Youth Committee**

The PERC Youth Conference takes place each two years. It elects the PERC Youth Committee for two-year mandate. The [Conference in Athens](#), 18-19 November 2015, focused on Building workers' power and youth organising. The [Conference in Baku](#), 6-7 November 2017 debated youth employment and the future of work.

The PERC Youth Committee meets twice a year. Thematic discussions implemented by the Youth Committee included [Youth employment and the future of work](#) (Baku, 8-9 September 2016), [Trade union communication and campaigning](#) (Baku, 29-31 September 2015), Democracy and freedom of association (Bratislava, 26-27 September 2018).

A [special brochure](#) on trade union youth work practices was developed by the Youth Committee.

The Youth Committee provides expertise to sub-regional and national level youth activities, e.g. through youth networks (e.g. in Central Asia).

### **PERC Summer School**

The PERC Summer School serves as an issue-based pan-European trade union debate platform. It is organised annually.

In [2014](#), the School (Bratislava, 6-7 October) discussed the outcomes of the 3<sup>rd</sup> ITUC World Congress, including the Building Workers Power agenda, with its pillars of realising rights, organising and sustainable jobs. The trade union leaders called for strong social dialogue and robust institutions as a prerequisite for labour movement growth.

In [2015](#) (Tbilisi, 19-21 October), the focus was on the elaboration of the PERC programme document that was adopted by the PERC General Assembly in December 2015.

In [2016](#), it (Frankfurt, 26-28 September 2016) focused on migration processes in Europe, in the context of refugees' crisis and demographic and economic challenges. Close attention was paid to the consequences for working people and their families, union actions to integrate and to protect migrant workers, as well as to fight discrimination, social dumping and abuse based on the transnational nature of recruitment.

In [2017](#), it debated 'Fair Wages: closing tax, social and pay gaps' (Rönneberga, Sweden, 18-20 September 2017), trade union policies and actions to achieve decent wages in their countries, supporting the ITUC 'End Corporate Greed' and the ETUC 'Europe needs a pay rise' campaigns, by identifying existing pay gaps and sharing experiences about trade union actions to close them.

The [2018](#) PERC Summer School (Sarajevo, 11-13 September) debated the rise of the right-wing, radical and populist political forces. Also discussed was the dismantlement of welfare institutions as a result of austerity measures that provoked feelings of insecurity and disillusionment among the majority of the population. The challenges related to the integration of migrants – both economic and refugees – in the communities, and instigation of xenophobic attitudes, particularly, among youth, by politicians were also discussed. Special attention was devoted to the shrinking democratic spaces in Hungary and Poland, and to the attacks on Freedom of Association in several European countries.

### **International Labour Conference**

PERC coordinates regional consultation and country cases preparation for the Committee on Application of Standards (CAS) of the International Labour Conference. Preparatory meetings took place in [Athens](#) (2015), [Lisbon](#) (2016), [Belgrade](#) (2017) and [Bucharest](#) (2018). Several countries (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Turkey and Ukraine, among others) were repeatedly discussed by the CAS during last years, demonstrating a serious deterioration of trade union rights at national, but also at regional level.

### **SEE and NIS networking**

PERC continued to support meetings of trade union experts from the SEE and NIS sub-regions. This was done with the support of Union2Union and ACTRAV. Issues of common interest, in particular, in the legal (ILO and EU standards, supervisory machinery, collective labour disputes, labour inspection, pension reforms etc.), economic (wages, taxation systems, collective labour disputes, pension reforms, International financial institutions etc.), occupational health and safety (prevention policies, climate change, cancer at work, psychological risks etc.), and communication spheres (trade union campaigning, internal and external communication, social networks for trade union work etc.) were discussed. In cooperation with ACTRAV (and other SSOs), PERC contributed to (sub) regional trade union meetings / consultations: on Sustainable Development Goals (Chisinau, October 2018), the future of work (Baku, September 2017), the transition from the informal to the formal economy (Dushanbe, October 2018, Dubrovnik, October 2014, Montenegro, May 2015 and 2017), peace and resilience (Cholpan-Ata, July 2018), Child and Forced Labour (Cholpan-Ata, July 2017), wage formation policies (Chisinau, May 2017), freedom of association (March 2018), international labour standards (Vilnius, April 2018), migration (May 2016) and the International Financial Institutions (Brussels, November 2014).

### **Civil society consultations**

PERC is involved in civil society platforms and Domestic Advisory Groups under the Association and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Agreements between the European Union and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as in consultations on due diligence run by the EBRD and EIB. It also participates in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum. European Neighbourhood Policies and Eastern Partnership Policies are debated with the respective EU institutions during Executive Committee meetings or at specially organised activities (e.g. [Brussels](#), 20-22 May 2015).

### **Climate Justice and Industrial Transformation**

NIS and SEE OSH networks launched climate justice and industrial transformation discussions. The future of work consultation process, in cooperation with ACTRAV, provided another debate platform (Baku, September 2017, Chisinau, October 2018), as well as UNECE Sustainable Development Goals consultative process (March 2017, 2018). PERC also contributes to associated future of work activities of affiliates.

### **Taming Corporate Power in Supply Chains**

Joint actions with the ETUC's "Europe Needs A Pay Rise" campaign had strong support of unionists from Central and Eastern Europe and highlighted wage discrimination between Eastern and Western subsidiaries of the same MNEs and the imperative of upward wage convergence in the European Union and beyond (Bratislava, September 2017, Sofia, June 2018). Specific discussions on wage formation were also held in the NIS and the SEE sub-regions. Several national level discussions focussed on specific challenges faced by social protection systems (e.g. Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Serbia...).

### **Eliminating Slavery**

PERC continues working with the Federation of Trade Unions of Uzbekistan towards the elimination of forced labour practices and the enforcement of international labour standards. It was involved in monitoring FIFA 2018 World Cup developments following a successful campaign to stop labour law exemptions in the construction sector in Russia.

### **Countries At Risk**

PERC supports affiliates that face attacks on trade union rights. It developed joint statements with the ETUC/TUAC addressed to EU institutions and the OECD. It provides visibility to cases of abuse by launching specific campaigns (e.g. Kazakhstan and Belarus), preparing missions to the countries to raise concerns with governments (Kazakhstan, Belarus, Ukraine, Uzbekistan, Turkey), assists in the development of formal complaints to the ILO (Belarus, Kazakhstan, Montenegro, Romania, Ukraine) and facilitates ITUC legal clinics (Ukraine, Romania). Legal and political advice on cases and demands from members about legal frameworks and labour relations systems, labour and related legislative initiatives is provided, with the support of the ITUC, the ETUC and the European Trade Union Institute. [Growing concern](#) about the disempowerment of labour inspectorates in the NIS region prompted the launch of a trade union campaign on the issue).

### **Global Coherence and Development**

PERC, together with the ETUC, follows the civil society platforms and domestic advisory groups of the Association and Deep Comprehensive Free Trade Area Agreements between the EU and Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

PERC contributes to the civil society input to the UNECE discussion of the Sustainable Development Goals implementation, the European Policy Forum on Development and ILO ACTRAV SDGs and Future of Work consultations, as well as to the annual meetings with the International Financial Institutions.

The [High Level Tripartite Regional Conference](#) on Taxation, Informality, and Corruption in the Western Balkans (Sarajevo, 9 November 2015) finalised a 3-year project with the support of the LO-Norway, which included national and regional level analysis and policy development forums. Based on the outcomes, a comparative report was released in early 2016.

### **Global governance of migration**

In accordance with the 2017 resolution of the PERC Executive Committee, the exchange of practices on integration and protection of migrant workers continued. This was achieved by facilitating bilateral meetings and participating in specific activities and supporting the ETUC's MigrantNet.

### **Count Us In!**

The Count Us In! campaign was signed by 22 European organisations and the number is still growing. The Women's Committee leads exchanges and campaigns on the care economy, gender based violence, the gender pay gap and the empowerment of women in unions and societies. Support is provided to affiliates engaged in national campaigning (e.g. in Georgia, Moldova, Albania, Serbia, Russia).

### **Organising**

The annual Organising Academies for the PERC region have mainly focused on young activists (Warsaw, 2015, Tbilisi, 2016, Zagreb, 2017, Sarajevo, 2018). It benefited from the support of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) and the Global Organising Academy. A best organising practices [brochure](#) was developed and published in Russian.

### **Funding**

PERC activities are supported by the FES, ACTRAV, Union2Union as well as by the European Trade Union Confederation and the European Trade Union Institute as well as a number of affiliates (including contributions in kind).