

ATHENS CONFERENCE

"Trade Unions and Immigration: New challenges in times of economic crisis"

Concluding remarks

EKA in cooperation with the Institute of Labor of the Greek General Confederation (INE-GSEE), organized a Conference in Athens on the 30th of January 2015 with the participation of the unions of EU Capital Cities such as: Rome (CGIL, CISL, UIL), Madrid (CCOO, UGT), Lisbon (CGTP-IN), Nicosia (SEK, PEO, DEOK) and with the participation of Luca Visentini from the ETUC.

The topic of the Conference was: **"Trade Unions and Immigration: New challenges in times of economic crisis"**.

The aims of the Conference was to highlight the new challenges that unions are facing in relation to migration and migrants, especially during the times of economic crisis, and also to identify convergences and divergences in south-European model of migration on both the characteristics of migrants (demographic and ethnicity) and the structural position in certain sectors in the labour market.

Concluding remarks

1. The Conference indicated that migration, migrants and their labour rights is a thorny issue for our societies and trade unions in the southern Europe.
2. There are many similarities which the conference tried to highlight. Actually to highlight everything that unites us, in order for our further cooperation to be better targeted and more efficient.
3. The crisis has admittedly worsen the situation of migrants more than that of the natives, because migrants experience specific situations related to residence permits, work permits, undeclared work, uninsured work, etc.
4. The social/labour/union integration of migrants is a challenge for our societies and the antidote to xenophobia and racism that awakens odious ghosts of the past in a Europe that has experienced such situations in the past.

The European policy

5. EU has shown so far that does not face in a comprehensive way the issue of migration. For this reason, a common European policy for a problem with wide connotation and pan European dimension is absolutely necessary. It is not acceptable migration in Europe to be treated with myopic national policies reflected in the agreement Dublin 2, which essentially divides EU countries in those of the borders – the south European ones- and the others protected in the central and Northern Europe, with tragic side effects for the first ones.
6. The situation that has transformed Mediterranean into a watery grave of thousands and thousands of migrants has to stop. It is not fair the Greek Islands, Lampedusa or other places at the EU borders to be forced to bear the burden of migration fluxes towards EU and the migrants to be trapped in those areas.

The actions of the unions

7. The actions of the unions were the most important chapter of the conference. The unions by definition are active on everything related to workers without discrimination, and therefore for migrants, based on the principles of humanism and serving as pillars of the constitution and democracy.
8. The conference proved that unions have developed significant actions despite the lack of experience in this field. Of course there is always room for improvement and enrichment of those actions.
9. The actions of the unions from Athens, Nicosia, Rome, Madrid and Lisbon, which emerged during the conference, are developed at national, regional and local level targeting on both: migrants and the union members, in order for the later to be able to work with migrants and to be efficient in resolving their problems.

They also work:

- against discrimination,
- for the inclusion in collective bargaining of issues relating to migrants,
- in networking services for migrants,
- in providing information through the creation of channels of communication electronic or written,
- in providing education (in topics such as: language learning, knowledge of labour rights, collective labour agreements, facilitating affiliation in trade unions, etc.)
- in enhancing cooperation between ECTUN and ETUC.

The role of the European Trade Union Confederation

10. The role of ETUC is particularly important and the **Union Migrant Net** should be used by all trade unions organizations members of ETUC.

In short

11. All the above actions contribute in the enforcement of a society of social rights and equal treatment for all citizens natives and migrants.