



22nd Conference - Belgrade 13, 14 June 2023

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY – A VITAL ISSUE FOR TRADE
UNIONS AND WORKERS IN THE CAPITAL CITIES

Report



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REPORT

The Coordinator **Christina Theochari** opened the works of the joint Training Conference ECTUN-ETUI and welcomed the participants. She referred to the foreseeable and unforeseeable consequences of the worldwide pandemic and the war in the heart of Europe, which have profoundly affected and still affect our societies and also work in all its facets, since the last Conference in 2020 at Helsinki. These consequences prove that we live in a very fragile world. Public health, peace, climate and eventually survival are not guaranteed.

She thanked **Vera Dos Santos Costa** the Director of the Education Department of the ETUI, CATUB and the President **Dragan Todorović** for hosting the event, the President of the Serbian Confederation CATUS

Ljubisav Orbović, the executive secretary of Nezavisnost **Milos Milcović**, all honoring the conference with their presence, and also **Viktor Kempa**, an ETUI expert on OHS.



Then she presented the topic and the agenda of the event. The first day was dedicated to Occupational Safety and Health (OSH). This topic has been at the heart of the trade union action and of the TUs in the European capitals.

OHS concerns all European citizens whether they work in a factory, in an office, sell goods in a shop or take care of patients in a hospital. Health and safety at

work is an essential part of any TU organisation's operations.

Then she referred to the works of the second day, the ratification of the first Statute of the network and other internal issues.



Then **Vera Dos Santos Costa** the Director of the Education Department of the ETUI delivered her speech: It is my turn to welcome you in the name of the ETUI (European Trade Union Institute) to this ECTUN Network Conference in this very nice city of Belgrade. I would like to thank our colleagues from Belgrade for hosting the Conference. This years' conference is about an utmost

important issue for all, health and safety at work. As centres of political, economic, and social activity, Capital cities attract large populations and face unique challenges in ensuring the well-being of their citizens.

I will outline some of those key health and safety concerns in capital cities and refer to some valuable insights provided by the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI). Capital cities are often characterized by intense work environments which can lead to high levels of occupational stress. Excessive workloads, long commuting hours, and limited work-life balance contribute to chronic stress among workers. The ETUI highlights the need for employers to implement effective stress management programs and promote work-life balance to mitigate the negative effects of occupational stress.

With the new forms of work and the technological developments, many workers in capital cities spend long hours sitting at desks, in vehicles or engaging in repetitive tasks, which can lead to ergonomic-related health issues. The ETUI emphasizes the importance of ergonomic assessment to reduce the risk of work-related injuries and improve overall well-being.

All those issues and more were explored during the training activities and will be reinforced during today's sessions.

As I already said, health and safety issues in the workplace are of utmost importance, particularly in capital cities where intense work environments and demanding schedules prevail. Addressing these concerns is not only essential for the well-being of

workers but also for future sustainable cities.

Sustainability and well-being are the two main priorities in the years to come. Trade Unions need to build their capacities to be the actors of the future. This is what this Network has been doing the last years.

Thanks to the commitment of the members of this ECTUN and particularly of your coordinator, to the educational and financial support of the ETUI and the political support of the ETUC, this Network has been building its capacity to stand as a valuable partner for a dialogue on the future of the working and living conditions in the capital cities. This Network has now the necessary autonomy to take the next steps and to continue its important work as a Network.

Your revised statutes that are on the agenda of tomorrow and the functioning of your permanent committee are the guaranty that this Network stands on its own feet and have grown to a well-structured and organised Network. I encourage this Network to also enlarge its perspective and find new ways to make its work visible to different Institutions. You are the right actor to put the workers of the capital cities with all their diversities, specificities and potential high on the agenda of the discussions about the future of work and the cost of living crisis. There are many different political arenas where Capital cities are discussed, but you have a unique position as Trade Union Network! You can make a change, grab this opportunity!

Dragan Todorović, welcomed the participants in Belgrade saying: It is my honour and pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Confederation of Autonomous Trade Union of Belgrade, the host of this year's conference.

I am delighted to **welcome Vera dos Santos Costa**, the director of the department of the European Trade Union Institute, one of the organizers of this conference. We also extend greetings to all our colleagues from the European trade unions that are present here today. Our trade union has successfully cooperated and nurtured friendly relations with them.

Now, I would like to extend greetings to our distinguished guests **Ljubisav Orbović**, the President of the Confederation of the Autonomous Trade Unions of Serbia, and the executive

secretary of Nezavisnost **Milos Milcović**. We appreciate their response to our invitation and their participation in this conference.

The presence of each and every one of you here today confirms the importance of the ECTUN network and this Conference. The significance of this conference, which focuses on safety and health at work in capital cities, lies in the exchange of experiences and examples of good practices among union colleagues. It is vital for our unions to acquaint themselves with the application of new technologies, strategies, and methods that enhance safety and health at work. This will enable us to be more efficient in our activities, provide better support to workers in protecting their rights, and, most importantly, ensure their well-being in the workplace.

We are aware that we live in a time of constant technological advancements and the emergence of new forms of work, which pose challenges for us as unions. Economic crises, compounded by the pandemic and current conflicts, have directly affected workers worldwide, particularly in terms of their working conditions, wages, and quality of life.

Moreover, these challenges have also impacted the safety and health of workers.

Poor working conditions, excessive workloads, high levels of workplace stress, low income, and job insecurity can have a detrimental effect on the mental health of workers, which must be addressed. The constant struggle to balance personal and professional responsibilities, including finding time for work

and family, also negatively impacts workers.

As trade unions, we have a crucial role in protecting workers' rights and ensuring safe and healthy working conditions.

This necessitates continuous education for our trade union representatives and collaboration with employers and other trade unions.

Regardless of our geographical locations, labour struggles and challenges increasingly possess a global character. Together, we can strengthen our fight for fairer, safer, and healthier working conditions. This conference provides an excellent opportunity for cooperation between trade unions from different countries and the exchange of experiences and best practices.

I am looking forward to gaining new knowledge, experiences,

and fellowship with all of you at this conference. My wish is for you to feel comfortable in our city and return with fond memories of Belgrade. Welcome to Belgrade!

Ljubisav Orbović, the president of the Association of Independent Trade Unions of Serbia (CATUS) addressed the audience and presented his trade union colleagues on the problems and challenges faced by trade unions in Serbia in the struggle for workers' rights, including health and safety of workers.



Milos Milcović, the executive secretary of Nezavisnost referred to the importance of the topic of

the Conference for the workers in the capital cities with their specificities.

Claes–Mikail Stohl, Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC delivered an online message referring to the importance of the OHS and the continuous efforts of the ETUC for the improvement of working conditions through legislation, campaigns etc.

The conference was attended by 15 trade union organisations from eight European capitals.

The participants then briefly presented the situation of Occupational Health and Safety in their capital cities and the actions of their unions to address the various challenges related to this issue.

Workshop

Viktor Kempa, ETUI OHS expert, introduced the topic:

Developments at work affecting working conditions and OHS - Technological development New forms of work and post-pandemic effects.

Following the introductory presentation, three working groups were formed according to spoken languages of participants and they had a debate on the questions given.

The questions for the Workshop were related to the way ECTUN members could address the new OHS challenges. Could they contribute and, if so, how to the spread of workplaces in the digital age. The main points for the debate in the groups:

- Establishing priority areas
- Facilitating the exchange of information and good practices
- Training needs
- What joint actions for the next period.

Each group chose one moderator. On completion of the groups' work, the moderators presented their reports at the plenary as follows.

Reports of the groups' moderators

Group 1

UGT Madrid, CCOO Madrid, CGT Paris, FGTB Brussels

Rapporteur Ana Belen Casado Penas (CCOO Madrid)

Priority areas: platform workers, subcontracted workers, domestic work and dependency, direct public work.

As main axes to work on: psychological risks, especially to

avoid non-traumatic pathologies, new work organizations, work coordination model, demographic change, ageing workforce, sustainability and climate change.

Information exchange, good practices

- Public control of occupational risk prevention in companies.
- Methods of evaluating occupational risks in companies.
- I.L.O. Convention 190 where all kinds of verbal or physical violence in the workplace must be eradicated.
- Tele-working : Right to digital disconnection.
- CCOO campaign "Let's fight harassment".

Training needs

- Lifelong learning
- Awareness-raising

Common actions for the next period

- Exchange of information and good practices
- Campaigns to be shared
- Proposals for common actions
- Education
- A continuous exchange between ECTUN members

Group 2

CGT Paris, FO Paris, UNSA Paris, CFDT Paris, CGTP Lisbon

Moderator: Laurent Pagnier

Rapporteur: Olivier Clément

In order to provide the best possible response to all the issues relating to health and safety at work in the future, the group felt that it was necessary to carry out an assessment targeting psychosocial risks and

identifying the sectors most at risk.

Although some of these measures already exist, how can they be translated into real application?

It should be noted that the statistics which are difficult to read in France are mainly to be found in the public sector. The ministries involved in these statistical evaluations do not cross-reference their respective information, and the results are fragmented and not aggregated, so they have no real material value in terms of institutional effectiveness.

The COVID 19 crisis is also a problem for making visible the accounting of statistical results in terms of workplace risk assessment.

The question of assessment is a priority and must lead to

prevention in the various occupational areas. Depending on requirements, this approach needs to be made visible by drawing on the quality of occupational medicine. So it's important to refocus our awareness on the new illnesses, particularly those that have emerged as a result of the pandemic, and accidents linked to platform workers and other highly exposed sectors.

We can ask ourselves what joint action, in the light of the European directives in force, we could take to overhaul occupational medicine at European level. It's up to us to think about it!

The issue of the intensification of work as an element harmful to health was raised, such as teleworking for too long, which is used as the only way to work, or platform work, which is also a

sector of activity where the volume of working hours is very high.

Our Portuguese colleague pointed out that there is no occupational health service for these new workers. In his opinion, this issue needs to be resolved at European level.

Workers must receive the best possible training. Vocational training must be successful in limiting risks. Here too, the trade unions must regain the upper hand, because vocational training is at the heart of future trade union action to ensure that the workers targeted are as well prepared as possible to understand their working environment. Talking about initial or continuing vocational training should lead us to negotiate in professional branches targeted by occupational health and safety

issues. We were also concerned about new management techniques (management by cart: multiplying the volume of tasks to be done in a short space of time by the worker).

For trade unionists to be able to respond to a public of workers exposed to health and safety issues at work, it is important to follow trade union training courses that address the issues at stake.

It is essential to be able to put psychosocial risks into perspective in order to control and promote them. Our role is to make workers aware of the issue, and to do that we need the best in-house training.

The occupational health management system must also include a prevention unit covering all sectors. This is a common demand. Having tools that go beyond statistical figures

should make it easier for workers to know their rights in this area. The trade unions should also be involved in carrying out audits, either on their own or with the support of expert firms.

Lastly, we propose that the ECTUN unions get involved in World Day for Health at Work in 2024 by initiating a joint action.

Group 3

EKA Athens, UNSA Paris, CGIL Rome and Lazio, CISL Rome, La Valletta GWU

Rapporteur: Giampiero

Modena, CGIL Rome and Lazio

1. PRIORITIES FOR ACTION

There are two main areas of work to be done: identifying the operational methods and sectors requiring priority intervention.

Operational modes

Our organizations in the European context must make a uniform effort to achieve:

- a. The proper recognition of the role of workers' safety representatives in the workplace: they are the key figure to which workers and companies must refer.
- b. Efficient and effective supervision in the workplace. Standardize the operations of those who go into companies and make the prescriptions given to companies effective.
- c. Effective health surveillance and maintaining job security for those unfit for a certain task: workers must be guaranteed health and income.

Sectors of intervention

Health statistics must be standardized and provide useful elements to identify accident

indices that allow intervention in the sectors and places most at risk.

- a. Platform work
- b. Construction and maintenance
- c. Transport and logistics
- d. Health and social work professions

2. PRACTICES TO BE EXCHANGED

It is essential to keep the network between our organizations permanently operational. Intensify opportunities for confrontation

- It is necessary to think in terms of a collective intelligence: today's complexity makes it increasingly difficult to reason without constantly communicating with one another.

- The sharing of critical issues and collective reflections lead more easily to defining which and how good practices can be exchanged and enhanced in their contexts of application

3. TRAINING

The objective of training is to induce people to change their habits in life and at work to lead them to exclude risky behavior. Our focus is in particular on:

1. Basic training required by the standard, aimed at workers, employers and workplace supervisors.

- It is important to check the validity of the training. To this end, ways of verifying the correct level of training and learning should be identified at European level.

2. It is important to disseminate a health and safety culture among the population.

- It is suggested that an education plan be developed in schools to lay the foundations of this culture updated to the context of the third millennium

3. Introduce supplementary training for workers' safety representatives and prevention service managers to provide them with the elements to understand the new dimension of risk.

- The environmental crisis, the potential pandemic risk, the situation of generalized conflict, the new international and globalization scenarios and finally technological innovation (mechatronics, digital revolution) introduce new elements to be taken

into account in risk assessment.

- The conditions in large urban agglomerations lead to further elements of conflict with an increase in violence, discrimination and psychosocial pathologies that spill over onto differences in gender, orientation, origin, culture. It is necessary for workers' representatives to receive good training on these additional elements to be considered in risk assessment.

4. PRIORITY ACTIONS

1. Network reinforcement

- Intensify regular online meetings in the periods between face-to-face meetings, either in the form of a seminar or workshop, with topics deemed prevailing from time to time

2. Confrontation with stakeholders, both at European level (e.g. hearings at the Euro parliament), national level, public level (central and/or regional institutions) and employers' organizations, in order to prioritize issues.

- Improve supervision (efficiency and effectiveness) and tighten penalties for companies that do not guarantee safety.
- Strengthen the role and authority of workers' representatives
- Intervening in high-risk work sectors, both by integrating databases and by integrating risk assessment methods
- Find solutions for the redeployment of workers who are no longer suitable for their jobs

- Introducing work policies that guarantee safety by taking into account age, gender, family issues (children, elderly, disabled) , origin, disability and any other factor that may generate problems in terms of health and safety when carrying out one's duties.
- Facilitating the livability of workers, both in terms of transport (to and from the workplace) and housing (facilitating remote working solutions or bringing the workplace closer).

3. Work in communication to inform the public and gain broader support for a health and safety policy for men and women workers



SECOND DAY

The second day was dedicated to internal ECTUN issues.

1. Validation of the decision of the Permanent Committee (PC) on the suspension of the Moscow MTUF union.

Christina Theochari referred to what led to the decision of the PC. On 21 February 2023 the PC received a written request from the three Rome trade unions CGIL, CISL and UIL requesting the self-suspension of the MTUF from ECTUN and their non-participation in the Conference. Similar requests had been transmitted orally to the PC from several ECTUN members, and a long debate within PC

followed the Russian invasion in Ukraine. In order to overcome the situation without jeopardizing the present conference, the PC asked MTUF to self-suspend in order to avoid divisive situations within ECTUN and the failure of the annual ECTUN meeting due to lack of participants.

This request stems from the violation of all rules of international law, all humanitarian principles and rights, and all principles of respect for the territorial integrity and national independence of a sovereign state. The results of this war involve atrocities against civilians, destruction of cities and infrastructure, loss of life and hundreds of thousands of refugees.

The MTUF responded to the PC's request on 24 of March,

rejecting the proposal for voluntary self-suspension. ECTUN members like all trade unions, are pro-peace and find it unacceptable that the MTUF did not condemn the invasion.

At the same time, the President of the Russian Confederation, with which the MTUF organization is linked, praised the invasion.

As for trade unions being political, trade unions act politically. Not in the sense of party or government.

When trade unions demand rights, wages, working conditions, they do politics. When Mikhail Shmakov, leader of the Russian Confederation of Trade Unions, praises Putin's invasion in Ukraine, he is being political.

The coordinator read then the decision of the Permanent

Committee issued on the 25th of April 2023.

DECISION ON MTUF ISSUE

ECTUN is a network of trade unions committed to international cooperation, with full respect for the diversity and autonomy of its member organisations. But, if ECTUN practice cooperation, the members are also united by a set of positive and humanitarian values, promoting development and the rights and interests of workers in a world of progress and peace.

About a year ago, the territory of Ukraine was invaded by Russian troops, in total and affronting disrespect for its sovereignty, where a bloody and disastrous war continues, with extremely serious consequences for the people and workers of both, the invaded and invader nations. Not only that, but all economies have

suffered very serious shocks and the consequences are affecting jobs, wages, living standards and labour rights. In these circumstances, statements or appeals in defence of Peace are more than necessary and not expendable.

An active and committed from always member of ECTUN is the MTUF, the regional trade union in the Russian capital, Moscow. So far, the MTUF maintains so far its participation in ECTUN, but it has no known positions condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine, nor serious appeals for peace. Diligences were made between the members of the Permanent Committee (PC), so that the MTUF would find a way to keep itself united with the trade union values and the ECTUN members, but this proves to be impossible.

In these circumstances and with the next annual ECTUN Conference approaching, the PC decides:

- 1. To suspend the MTUF from participation in all ECTUN activities and therefore not be invited to participate in the next Conference;*
- 2. To propose to the Conference the ratification of this decision, maintaining the suspension sine die the described circumstances change;*
- 3. To invite the MTUF to reflect and take a public, clear, effective and urgent position in defence of serious negotiations for the end of the war in Ukraine, with the liberation of the invaded territories and the return of peace.*

25 April 2023

Diana Agostinello from CGIL Rome and Lazio presented the request sent, together with CISL Rome and UIL Rome and Lazio, to the PC in which they asked it to propose to the MTUF Moscow to self-suspend, explaining the reasons for this.

They acknowledged and appreciated the PC's various attempts to do so, which unfortunately were unsuccessful. The Rome unions agreed with the PC's decision to put MTUF's suspension from ECTUN to a vote at the conference.

There was then a ZOOM link-up with MTUF Moscow, namely with the president **Mickail Antontsev** and **Yulia Turkina**, Head of International Relations Department.

Mickail Antontsev presented his views, which were similar to the message sent by Yulia to the PC

in response to the request for self-suspension.

Voting procedure

A vote was then held. Three colleagues **Laurent Pagnier, Olivier Clement and Jesmond Marshal** formed the election committee. A ballot box, ballot papers and the list of voters were set up. Each organization had one (1) vote. Thirteen people (13) voted. The election committee counted the ballots and announced the result:

11 (eleven) voted in favor of the PC's decision and 2 (two) against.

Decision: MTUF Moscow was declared suspended from ECTUN.

2. The first ECTUN Statute

Christina Theochari made an introduction to the subject.

For first time ECTUN will have a statute. This statute serves to regulate the affairs of the network. It consists of eight (8) articles. The drafting was based on the accumulated experience and the problems that arose with the previous rules, with the aim of improving the shortcomings. The preparation phases were:

- The first draft was presented by the coordinator to the PC on February 21, 2023.
- Time was given for comments from the PC members.
- The first draft was sent to ECTUN members to receive comments within one month, until 28 April.
- All comments received were incorporated into the text.
- A final draft was sent to all ECTUN members and this is the final version.
- The latter will be ratified by the plenary today.

- Some final improvements were made to the text today.

Then the coordinator presented in power point the final version which was put to the approval of the members.

The final version was unanimously approved by the plenary by raising the hand.

Debate

Then a debate took place on the character of the next Conference in 2024, whether that will be an election one or not, given that the mandate of the current PC expires in 2025.

The need to renew the PC was raised due to the new statute, the suspension of one member and the low participation of some members.

After an interactive debate, the proposal was accepted by a majority vote on a show of hands.

Decision: The next conference will be electoral, to elect the new PC.

3. Annual Report

The coordinator presented the annual report of the PC.

Debate

ERASMUS plus program:

The coordinator informed that the project leader ERFAP/UIIL, by mid-July will share with the partners the new requirements for the preparation of the proposal to be presented in autumn.

FGTB Brussels expressed their wish to get involved in the program.

4. Next Conferences

- For the preparation of the next Conference in 2024 in Madrid, the Permanent Committee will work with the

Madrid trade unions CCOO and UGT on all organizational aspects.

- For the 2025 Conference, **Jesmond Marshal** (GWU) proposed to be in La Valletta. The proposal was unanimously accepted.

Dragan Todorović, thanked all for their participation in the Conference.

The coordinator thanked CATUB and the President for hosting the Conference, **Ulisses Garrido**, who ensures contact and synergy with the ETUI for his stable cooperation and support and everyone for their contribution.

Then the Conference was closed with applause.

