

## 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary accomplishments in Europe and Central Asia

### Overview and thematic highlights

First of all I would like to highlight the *enthusiasm of the tripartite constituents* to take the opportunity of the ILO's 90<sup>th</sup> anniversary and engage in a series of national commemorative activities. These were not only held in capital cities but also across different regions of some countries. So far there have been around 40 events in 20 countries across the Europe and Central Asia region and several more are scheduled for the autumn (Austria, Finland and Hungary). They mobilized *high level attendance*, Presidents (Albania) or Prime Ministers (Ireland), heads of the Parliament (or Senate in France), many Ministers of Labour, heads of the social partner organisations, parliamentarians, academia, the UN and other partner organisations.

The *diversity of events and themes* was remarkable and reflected national priorities: book launches on the history of the ILO (Ireland), inauguration of ILO libraries at state universities, national parliaments or social partners' education facilities (Russian Federation, Ukraine), celebrations of national anniversaries of ILO membership (Ukraine) or the institutionalization of national social dialogue (Poland), launching of a national child labour monitoring unit (Tajikistan), thematic seminars on the application of ILO conventions at the national level in the areas of occupational safety and health (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Russian Federation, Serbia) and seafarers (Spain), or decent work for domestic workers (Belgium). In many of the Western European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Portugal), conferences and round tables focused on the historical evolution of the ILO and its values over time leading to the Decent Work agenda.

Much emphasis was given to *media coverage and visibility* of the ILO and its key messages, in the press, radio and TV and also through posters at the public transport systems (Belgrade), and the Metro (Moscow).

The events were often an opportunity to highlight and appreciate the *country's achievements as a result of the cooperation with the ILO* over the years and in the framework of the DW agenda (e.g. in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Moldova).

Two common aspects came to the fore in all these activities:

- the *universality of the ILO's values* since its creation as demonstrated in the three Declarations of 1944, 1998 and 2008, the International Labour Standards and the DW agenda. The Irish PM referred to the creation of the international labour code as "*an enormous contribution to the development of employment rights, social policy and equal opportunities at EU level and across the globe*";
- the enduring *relevance of these values for each national context* and its tripartite constituency, for developed and developing countries as well as those in transition.

We can truly say that the constituents, throughout all these commemorative activities, recognized the strength they gained from the ILO's history "*to address the challenges of today and to shape a better future*", in line with the DG's statement "*90 years working for social justice*".

## **Future aspects and plans**

In a number of countries, tripartite events were used for urging the governments of those countries to ratify all up-to-date ILO Conventions and amend national legislation and policies to reflect this. Commitments were made to pursue decent work for all in national policies, and contribute to a fairer distribution of globalization outcomes.

The Belgian Vice-Prime Minister announced that decent work would be “*an important theme for its forthcoming EU Presidency*”. Other speakers referred to the tasks ahead for the ILO to be effective for another 90 years, namely to continue promoting the application of the core labour standards; to integrate ILO policies more widely into the multilateral system including the G-20 process; and to provide intellectual leadership in labour and social questions (UK and others).

## **Emphasis given to the economic crisis and its mitigation**

In practically all activities reference was made to the global crisis and the importance of adhering to the principle of social justice, applying the four pillars of the DW agenda to mitigate the impact of the crisis and working towards new scenarios for a fair globalization. Several countries highlighted the ILO’s strong response to the crisis and saw this as linked to the ILO’s own history and its capacity to adapt and modernise to respond effectively to new challenges.

To finalize, I would like to thank all our constituents, partners and the ILO staff who have worked hard at making these 90<sup>th</sup> celebrations a success in our region. It became evident that after 90 years of joint work many people are truly committed to this organisation and the values it represents. Indeed, I think that we can concur with the DG that “*these local dialogues will have global significance and impact*”.