



2008/108471 Project Health, Safety and Environment (HSE) in the Work place, Bulgaria  
Проект 2008/108471 "Здравословни, безопасни и екологични условия на труд". България

### **Final International Conference**

## **IMPROVEMENT OF THE SOCIAL DIALOGUE ON HEALTH AND SAFETY VIA COOPERATION BETWEEN BULGARIA AND NORWAY**

### **Welcoming speech of Mr. Plamen Dimitrov, President of CITUB**

Dear Mr. Stoynev – Chairman of the Labour and Social Policy Commission at the Parliament,

Dear Mr. Miroslavov and Mrs. Petkova from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy,

Dear Mrs. Mihailova – Executive Director of “General Labour Inspectorate” Executive Agency

Dear Mr. Vidar Bjørnstad who joined again the Confederation of Norwegian Trade Unions - LO after two mandates in the Parliament of the Kingdom of Norway,

Dear brother Hans Øyvind Nilsen from the Confederation of Norwegian Trade Unions - LO,

Dear Representatives of the Employers and Employees, of Medias and Partners,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to the Final International Conference „*Improvement of the Social Dialogue on Health and Safety via Cooperation between Bulgaria and Norway*” which closes the joint project of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions - LO and CITUB “Health, Safety and Environment in the Work place, Bulgaria”. The project is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the “General Labour Inspectorate” Executive Agency, the Institute for Social and Trade Union Research” – Bulgaria and the Institute for Labour and Social Research, Fafo - Norway.

As a President of the biggest representative workers’ and employees’ organization – the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions in Bulgaria – I would like to point out that one of our leading priorities is the active participation in the humanizing of the work environment which implies the use of a huge set of actions in order to guarantee the right of the working people to healthy, safe and ecological working places. Our objective is to enhance the job creation characterized by favourable social climate as a prerequisite for provision of “well-being at the workplace” in accordance with the European strategy for health and safety at work.

The active social dialogue at all levels is an important prerequisite for the implementation of that priority. The sixth annual two-year’s report of the European Commission “The industrial relations in Europe 2010” was published recently. It



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развитие в България



clearly states that in the last two years *the development of the social dialogue was an important factor for the mitigation of the consequences of the crisis and for the development of recovery programs*. In the report is pointed out that *“the industrial relations in Europe have been shown to be robust under strain and have been vital in mitigating the effects of the recession, although not to the same extent in all countries”*. As an acknowledgement of the mutual efforts is the statement that *“negotiation and consultation involving the social partners have played a significant role in limiting negative social consequences of the crisis”*, and *„Social dialogue led to innovative responses in many Member States and sectors”*, because *„the social partners who know best the world of work brought new ideas to the attention of the policymakers”*.

The crisis showed that the system of the European industrial relations in its diversity and at all levels is important for the success and stability of the European social model and will continue to be important especially now when Europe gets out of the crisis and begins a new period of growth.

In the period of implementation of our project the social partners at European level concluded several agreements which have a real importance for all employees and workers as they cover such issues as: inclusive labour markets, parental leave, principle of equal treatment, including self-employed, aimed at improving work- life balance which were introduced via European Directives.

The Directive introducing the Framework Agreement of the social partners on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector and the Directive introducing main clauses from the ILO Maritime Labour Convention are both very important for the pilot sectors.

Guidelines for Good Practices were developed for implementation of some Directives in the sphere of health and safety at work (noise, construction, artificial optic radiation).

The social partners are expected to play a vital role in the implementation of Europe 2020 “Strategy for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth”. The objective is in 10 years time to achieve more innovations, less energy consumption and low carbon economy as well as better qualified work force equipped with skills and competences to work in the new conditions.

The four key priorities of the Strategy starting with the flex security and going to the skills, work conditions and jobs creation have a direct link to our project. Their implementation cannot be achieved without the efforts of all European countries, of the trade unions and employers’ organizations at European and national levels.

The principles of flex security should be further developed in order to reduce the segmentation of the work force, especially taking into account the young and older workers. The flexible work schemes should be aimed at facilitating the participation in labour and work-life balancing.

The social partners should negotiate measures and instruments for facilitating the opportunities of the people to develop the necessary skills in accordance with the fast changing challenges to employment in the conditions of technological and organizational change and transition to low carbon economies. This is also important for the business in order to be competitive and innovative, for the active inclusion of the labour force in the labour market and for the achievement of the fundamental rights. The recovery from the crisis should be based upon growth accompanied by job creation – for the high-qualified and for the low-qualified workers with encouragement of the entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The policy on health and safety at work is clearly outlined in the Strategy. The reduction of the labour related accidents and occupational diseases, the stress and the psycho social risks is important not only for the people and their well-being but also for the achievement of higher productivity of labour. The more frequent transitions in the employment and the new forms of work organization put new challenges with regard to the working conditions and the quality of jobs so we need more efforts in order to overcome the paradox that more work places mean more low quality jobs or jobs with worse work conditions. The creation of healthier work environment is important with regard to the tendency of prolongation of labour life.

The main challenge which the social partners in Bulgaria and Norway face is the introduction and implementation of the above mentioned Directives and Strategy 2020. But as our experience shows their legislative introduction is not enough. It is only a prerequisite for possible improvements of the work conditions which in certain sectors and companies could be achieved only if the social partners engage actively in joint actions for their initiation and implementation.

The social dialogue is important for the modernization and transformation of the industry and services. The good practices are a result of the knowledge and the mutually agreed objectives. That's why we need a sustainable system of industrial relations which acknowledges the important role of each partner and is based on their engagement and the aspiration for achievement of consensus on key issues regarding health and safety at work though sometimes the interests of the labour and capital differ. The trade union and employers' organizations could build their capacity through cooperation with the confederations and the organizations from the other European countries, to benefit from their experience and competences.

Dear colleagues and guests,

We are living in times of considerable changes caused by the technological renovation, the globalization of the economy and the European integration which place the people from Europe and the world closer to each other. The globalization gets over the space and eliminates the borders. It creates new possibilities for partnership between the social partners from different countries and we should acknowledge this and benefit from the potential of those opportunities.

This Conference is only one of the elements of the cooperation initiated by the Confederation of the Norwegian trade Unions – LO and CITUB two years ago. This



cooperation expressed in the results achieved by the project creates real prerequisites for a better and more efficient social dialogue on health and safety at work in the enterprises of the six pilot branches – transport, metallurgy, healthcare, energy, construction and maritime transport. We hope through the network of the work conditions' committees to disseminate this new experience and good practices to more enterprises by enlarging it to other sectors/branches and turn it into a forum for sharing of innovative ideas. In this way we'll implement in practice the added value of the project.

We are sure that our project will continue to contribute after its completion for the better implementation of the existing legislation on health and safety at work through the established partnerships and through the implementation of the exchanged good practices, in particular those shared by our colleagues from Norway.

By strengthening the coordination and synergy between the social partners at national level in Norway and Bulgaria we need to enlarge the partnership between the two countries through continuing our joint projects, exchange of experience and the use of new mechanisms for the increase of the capacity of our organizations for the acceleration of the growth of the economy of our country and also the growth of the employees and the business. Main priority in our future cooperation remains the development of the skills and competences which are a key aspect of the European social dialogue including the European Sectoral Committees part of which already expressed their willingness to establish European Sectoral Councils on work places and skills.

We appreciate highly the efforts of all participants and partners in this project. We want to express our special gratitude to our trade union colleagues from LO and Fafu who shared valuable experience which undoubtedly will make a positive impact upon the development of the social dialogue in the pilot sectors.

I would like to underline once again the importance of the financial support of the Norwegian government for the achieved results in Bulgaria through the Norwegian Cooperation Program for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development. We express our gratitude for the good cooperation with Innovation Norway.

I would like to express our satisfaction with the new initiative of the Norwegian government included in the program 2009-2014 – the establishment of **Global fund for decent labour and tripartite dialogue**. It will create conditions for improvement of the social dialogue and its bi- and tri-partite structures and practices as well as the right to decent labour.

Taking into consideration that these are our common priorities – of the social partners and of the state, we are ready to work together for their implementation.

I wish you fruitful discussions during the Final conference which should contribute for the mutual benefit of all participants and for the successful implementation of the remaining activities in the framework of the project for the improvement of the work environment, social dialogue and partnership in Bulgaria and in Europe.

Thank you for your attention!

