

Regional Central and Eastern Europe Trade Union Conference
Held at Kelebija, Serbia
May 19-22, 2011





The Austrian FCG/GPA union and the World Organization of Workers (WOW) organized the Regional Central and Eastern Europe Trade Union Conference on May 19-22, 2011 at Kelebija. Trade union representatives of Central and Eastern Europe had the opportunity to hear more on the topic “Health at work” that in today’s hasty life has an increasing importance. Special attention was paid to the “burn out” syndrome that is, the syndrome of burning out at work, as well as to prevention of mobbing.

Participants from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Austria, Hungary, Montenegro, Macedonia and Serbia have exchanged experiences on the ‘burning out at work’ syndrome prevention as well as stress management since it was one of the essential causes of mobbing. Besides Mara Erdelj, President of SS BOFOS, Vladislav Jevtovic, President of SS BOFOS Provincial Committee of Vojvodina, Stanica Sarcanski, Vice-president of SS BOFOS and Mladen Popovic, member of SS BOFOS Presidency, the Regional Conference was also attended by representatives of the Autonomous Trade Union of Workers in Commerce of Serbia: Radoslav Topalovic, President and Sidonija Vukotic, Secretary of the Belgrade Committee. As the main topic of the Conference dealt with the importance of health at work preservation, one of the speakers at the Conference was Prim Jelka Rodic-Strugar Ph.D. from the Workers’ Health Protection Institute.



Dr Jelka Rodic-Strugar said a worker could refuse to work if his life and health were directly endangered, if protection measures were not introduced, if the employer has not provided for a medical checkup or if a worker was not informed on work place risks, if night work endangered his health and if safety measures were not implemented.

She also mentioned that the industrial medicine service participated in work place risks assessment and that the employer should appoint a risk assessment person to supervise safety measures and keep detailed evidence. Dr Strugar also explained that an enterprise employing over fifty workers should appoint a safety and health at work committee.

Dr Herbert Friesenbichler from Austria pointed out that stress at work caused even one third of health problems; one third of sick leaves in Austria was the consequence of stress caused diseases.

- Stress is also one of the main causes of concentration loss; a stressed worker is subject to injuries and mistakes at work, dr Friesenbichler added.

- A short-lasting pressure at work should be distinguished from continuous stress since the former can be favorable and might even strengthen worker's self-confidence. Continuous stress, for example the one caused by job loss fear is always negative, said Dr Friesenbichler.



Mara Erdelj, SS BOFOS President

- "In Serbia, financial sector employers consider stress as normal and integral part of work, as risk accompanying a profession; it is desirable for a worker to be stressed, thus proving his devotion", said Mara Erdelj, SS BOFOS President.

What is a “good job”?

- It is important to learn how to manage stress. Those who know how to overcome high stress levels are usually focused on positive aspects of their work since no work has bad sides only. “If we are focused on positive aspects of work we perform and if we are engaged in activities we like in our leisure time, we are on the good way to manage stress successfully” stressed Dr Friesenbichler.

Conference participants working in groups have defined what a good job was for them, aiming at positive aspects of work.

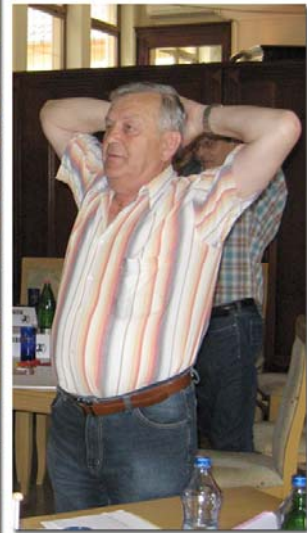
Hungary: Good job does not influence health unfavorably. It is paid adequately, and a worker is not forced to find an additional job to be able to secure his living. A positive feedback is also very important.

Macedonia: A fulfilling and well paid job, free from unnecessary pressure and unrealistic deadlines, can be considered a good one.

Montenegro: A good job is one that makes it possible for a worker to be creative and live on it.

Serbia: A good job offers a possibility to a worker to become self-realizable, to manage his working time, to be well paid, and to be on clients’ complete satisfaction.

Slovakia and Czech Republic: A job that makes a worker happy because his results encourage him, because there is a possibility to get ahead and be well paid.



The representative of the Workers’ Health Institute demonstrated several basic exercises helping those spending much time sitting to preserve a correct body position

“A satisfied and motivated worker has a longer life and work expectancy. Economically observed, he should be healthy and long-living so that a social system is not burdened”, said Dr Friesenbichler. According to him, aspects of a healthy working environment are: no discrimination, decision-making possibilities, freedom of association, gender equality, work and life balance, safety at work, and the like...

Mobbing – Bossing - Staffing

Katarina Reitmayr, representative of Austrian FCG/GPA explained the difference between three negative phenomena related to violation of a good working atmosphere. According to her, bossing implies existence of a mobber on a position in a company higher than victim's whilst stuffing is a situation where a worker is a mobber and the employer is a victim. Mobbing means harassment at work between colleagues occupying same positions in the company.

“A conflict existing at work can provoke mobbing, but this is not a rule. It often happens that a conflict exists whilst mobbing does not. The unsolved conflict can turn into mobbing; mobbing then loses all connection with the originally arisen conflict”, said Katarina Reitmayr and added that there is no the law on mobbing in Austria and that this is an additional problem.



Representatives of Serbia presented the most important facts on local regulations on harassment at work, and pointed out that a Law on Prevention of Harassment at Work was adopted and positively assessed by unions. It was also emphasized that some court decisions on mobbing have already been taken in Serbia.



Krsto Pejovic, President of Trade Unions of Financial Organizations of Montenegro said that the Montenegrin Agency for Peaceful Settlement of Labour Disputes deals with mobbing cases but only on the basis of the Labour Law due to the absence of a law on mobbing.

Goce Selovski M.A., President of Trade Unions of Financial Organizations of Macedonia (SFDM) said the union made a draft of a law on mobbing prevention. By the end of 2009 the draft law was included into Parliament's agenda but it was decided that article 1 from the draft concerning mobbing should be included into the Labour Law instead of adopting the Law on Mobbing Prevention in full.



While in Hungary there is the Law on Mobbing as a separate ethical codex (describing what employers and workers were expected in cases of mobbing), there are no laws in the Czech Republic and Slovakia regulating a protection from harassment at work; very few workers there reported on mobbing.