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Training Policies for Vulnerable Groups in Central and Eastern European Countries

Abstract
[From Preface] Since 1989, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have faced both challenges and opportunities in the field of human resource development. The challenges arise from major structural changes, such as economic restructuring and privatization and their adverse effects on economic growth and employment. Sluggish or unstable economic growth and the associated drop in labour demand, accompanied by an expansion of the informal economy, have contributed to high unemployment and the proliferation of precarious, poor quality jobs. This has resulted in significant waste of human resources. Apathy has spread among the emerging group of the working poor in formal and informal economies alike, undermining individual motivation to attend training and improve employability. At the same time, opportunities have emerged with the introduction of new forms of work organization and technologies, demanding high levels of skill and flexible working attitudes. As aspirations for high educational attainment remain strong across the region, there are good prospects for a high "social and economic return" on future investments in human resource development and training.

Keywords
vocational rehabilitation, rehabilitation, employment, disabled persons, disabled, person, convention, member, European, countries, group, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, union, trade, ETUC, Ukraine

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Trade Union Seminar Report, Prague, 24–26 June 2002. Organized by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities, the ILO InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability, and the ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe.

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Training Policies for Vulnerable Groups in Central and Eastern European Countries

Seminar Report

Prague, 24-26 June 2002

International Labour Office

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Organized by the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities,
the ILO InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability,
and the ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe

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Preface

Since 1989, the countries of Central and Eastern Europe have faced both challenges and opportunities in the field of human resource development. The challenges arise from major structural changes, such as economic restructuring and privatization and their adverse effects on economic growth and employment. Sluggish or unstable economic growth and the associated drop in labour demand, accompanied by an expansion of the informal economy, have contributed to high unemployment and the proliferation of precarious, poor quality jobs. This has resulted in significant waste of human resources. Apathy has spread among the emerging group of the working poor in formal and informal economies alike, undermining individual motivation to attend training and improve employability. At the same time, opportunities have emerged with the introduction of new forms of work organization and technologies, demanding high levels of skill and flexible working attitudes. As aspirations for high educational attainment remain strong across the region, there are good prospects for a high "social and economic return" on future investments in human resource development and training.

The challenges of transition seem to have outweighed the opportunities for certain groups of workers, such as women, young workers and persons with disabilities. Persistent direct and indirect employment discrimination against these groups has been exacerbated by limited access to training. Exclusion from employment is the shortest path to poverty, and vulnerable groups are at higher risk.

Over the last years, trade unions have become increasingly interested in strengthening their expertise in the area of human resource development and training. Enhanced access to training for vulnerable groups has been part of the effort to address the problem of persistent high unemployment and underemployment in these groups.

In order to address these issues, a Sub-regional Trade Union Seminar on Training Policy for Vulnerable Groups was organized in Prague on 24–26 June 2002. It was the result of the cooperation between the ILO Sub-regional Office in Budapest, the Bureau for Workers' Activities, and the InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability at ILO Geneva. The seminar was made possible by a generous financial contribution from the Flemish government.

It is broadly accepted that investment in education and training is a key to economic and social development. The proactive involvement of trade unions can contribute significantly to this process. This Seminar Report is aimed at assisting trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe to participate more in the design and implementation of policies on skills development and training, focusing especially on groups with special needs. The underlying assumption is that negative trends accompanying the transition to a market economy can be tackled using a combination of policy measures, including employment generation and human resource development and training.

The Report highlights the need for changes in the legal and institutional framework, enabling further decentralization of decision-making in this area. The importance of shared responsibility and a participatory approach is emphasized, as there are no ready-made solutions or a single "best way" in this area. The great potential for innovation, depending on national traditions and the dynamism of the social partners, is also highlighted.

Michael Sebastian
Acting Director
Bureau for Workers' Activities

Girma Agune
Officer in Charge
Skills Development Department

CONTENTS

Preface III

1 OVERVIEW 1

1.1 Background 1

1.2 Participants 1

1.3 Official Opening 2

1.4 Contributions 2

1.5 Panel Discussions 2

2 TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS 4

2.1 The Labour Market Situation and Active Policies for Disadvantaged Groups in Central and Eastern Europe 4

2.2 Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups 5

2.3 ILO Policy on Training and Skills Development 6

2.4 Lifelong Learning 7

2.5 The Role of Trade Unions in CEE in Human Resource Training and Development 9

2.6 Belgian Experience in Training for Vulnerable Groups 10

2.7 ETUC Perspective on Lifelong Learning and the Role of Social Partners 12

3 PANEL DISCUSSIONS 14

3.1 Training Policy for Women Workers 14

3.2 Training Policy for Young Workers 18

3.3 Training Policy for Persons with Disabilities 22

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 25

5 APPENDICES 28

5.1 Seminar Programme 28

5.2 List of Participants 32

1 OVERVIEW

1.1 Background

The Prague seminar focused on access to training for groups facing particularly difficult employment challenges in the labour market – such as women, young workers and workers with disabilities. The event was organized jointly by the Bureau for Workers' Activities (ACTRAV), the InFocus Programme on Skills, Knowledge and Employability of the International Labour Organization (IFP/SKILLS) and the ILO Subregional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SRO-Budapest) with the financial support of the Flemish government.

1.2 Participants

Taking part in the seminar were a total of 31 trade union experts dealing with employment policy and training issues, as well as officials in the national trade union centres with responsibility for young workers, women workers, and workers with disabilities. Fifteen countries were represented: Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, Macedonia, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Slovakia and Ukraine. Also represented were the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), World Confederation of Labour (WCL) and European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), as well as the Belgian trade union federation FGTB and Czech NGOs.

1.3 Official Opening

The opening and welcome speeches were given by Mr Milan Štěch, President of CMKOS, and Mr Michael Sebastian, Deputy Director of the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities. Mr Štěch welcomed the participants on behalf of CMKOS, and underlined the importance of the seminar's topic for transition countries. Addressing the seminar on behalf of the ILO, Mr Sebastian emphasized the importance of training and skills development within overall ILO policies. He gave an overview of the ILO Decent Work Agenda, and explained how this has been translated into the strategies and policies of the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities. After introducing the participants, Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova, Senior Specialist for Workers' Activities at the ILO Sub-regional Office for Central and Eastern Europe (SRO Budapest), presented the objectives of the Seminar: strengthening the capacity of trade union organizations in CEE, while addressing training policy issues in general, and training and skills development for vulnerable groups in particular.

1.4 Contributions

- The labour market situation and active policies for disadvantaged groups in Central and Eastern Europe by Ms Alena Nesporova, Senior Labour Economist of the ILO Employment Strategy Department
- ILO policy on training and skills development by Mr Torkel Alfthan, Senior Training Policies Specialist at the Training Policies and Progammes Group of the ILO Skills Development Department
- Lifelong learning (LLL) by Mr Michael Sebastian, Acting Director of the ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities
- Training policy for persons with disabilities by Ms Barbara Murray, Manager at the Equity Issues Group of the ILO Skills Development Department
- The role of trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe in human resource development and training by Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova, Senior Specialist for Workers' Activities, ILO Budapest
- The Belgian experience in training for vulnerable groups by Mr Eddy Van Lancker, Regional Secretary of ABVV West-Vlaanderen, FGTB
- ETUC perspective on lifelong learning and the role of the social partners by Mr Antonio Giacché, Advisor to ETUC
- Social exclusion of vulnerable groups by Mr Yannis Yfantopoulos, Professor of Health Economics and Social Policy, University of Athens

1.5 Panel Discussions

1. Training policy for women workers

Panelists: Ms Alena Nesporova (ILO)
Ms Agnieszka Ghinararu (ICFTU CEE Women's Network)
Ms Jagoda Milidrag-Smid (UATUC, Croatia)

2. Training policy for young workers

Panelists: Mr Torkel Alfhan (ILO)
Mr Péter Bányai (ICFTU Youth Network)
Mr Dušan Martinek (ČMKOS, Czech Republic)

3. Training policy for persons with disabilities

Panelists: Ms Barbara Murray (ILO)
Mr Josef Vanický (Association of Disabled Persons, Czech Republic)

The presentations and the main conclusions of the discussions are described in more detail in the following chapters.

2 TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

2.1 The Labour Market Situation and Active Policies for Disadvantaged Groups in Central and Eastern Europe

Ms Alena Nesporova, Senior Labour Economist, ILO Employment Strategy Department

Ms Nesporova highlighted major labour market challenges faced by the transition countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Economic and social reforms, combined with external shocks and consequent stabilization measures, caused sharp declines in demand for labour and employment during transition, which were translated into falling participation rates and accelerating open unemployment.

Even after economic recovery, the labour market situation did not improve much, and recently many countries have experienced a new rise in unemployment in connection with stronger structural changes. Unemployment has to a large extent a long-term character, with huge regional differences. The social groups hardest hit by unemployment, forced economic inactivity, and high incidence of precarious forms of employment include youth, low-skilled workers, persons with disabilities and certain ethnic minorities, particularly the Roma. The reasons include a lack of required skills, lower flexibility and mobility, and employers' perception of these workers as more costly and less productive and reliable than others, leading to direct or indirect discrimination against them. The labour market situation of women, compared with men, differs by country – but women are clearly disadvantaged in access to good jobs, remuneration and access to entrepreneurial credit schemes.

The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have oriented their labour market policies more to labour supply reduction than to employment promotion. There are also large differences among countries in the application and funding of passive and active policies, which are loosely related to the actual labour market situation and the level of unemployment in the country. The targeting of active policies also often disadvantages certain groups of jobseekers, such as older and low-skilled workers, or persons with disabilities. In order to make labour market policies more effective, there is a need for a shift from passive to active policies, better monitoring and evaluation, better targeting in line with labour market needs, and improvement in their design and implementation.

2.2 Social Exclusion of Vulnerable Groups

Mr Yannis Yfantopoulos, Professor of Health Economics and Social Policy, University of Athens

In 2000, the European Commission announced a new set of objectives for "shaping social Europe" and developing a framework to combat poverty and social exclusion. The Lisbon Summit gave a new impetus to the European Social Model, promoting the interrelationship between economic dynamism, full employment, and greater social cohesion among the member states. The Nice Summit provided the political basis for the consolidation of a Social Agenda in Europe by reinforcing "the modernization of the European Social Model" and emphasizing the "indissoluble link between economic performance and social progress". It was agreed that a new *Open Method of Co-ordination* should be established among the EU states, promoting *National Action Plans* to combat poverty and social exclusion.

Several studies in the EU have highlighted that the main factors contributing to social exclusion include the following: unemployment, illness, a lack of education, drug abuse, broken families, deteriorating social assistance, large families, a loss of solidarity, and a poor housing and social environment. The studies also found that the most vulnerable groups facing the risk of exclusion are people with disabilities, the elderly, the young unemployed, women and immigrants.

The EU strategy for social inclusion has four common objectives:

- To facilitate participation in employment and access by all to resources, rights, goods and services
- To prevent risks of exclusion
- To help the most vulnerable groups
- To mobilize all relevant actors

The accession and CIS countries, in their transition to a market economy, have confronted economic and social problems similar to those faced by the EU member states some years ago – i.e. differences in GDP per capita, high levels of income inequality, youth unemployment, and declining living conditions. The European Commission could provide valuable help towards improving governance, living standards and the quality of life of people with special needs in the accession countries and future member states.

2.2.1 Summary of Discussion

The representative of Moldova indicated that the high level and long duration of unemployment, together with inadequate unemployment benefits, pushes people to the informal economy. Given the low level of productivity and the lack of opportunities to improve skills, it is very difficult for disadvantaged groups, which are overrepresented in the informal economy, to reintegrate into the formal economy at a later point.

The Croatian representative raised the issue of the impact on poverty of the policies of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the region, indicating the contradiction between the "social models" of the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and the European Social Model. Those policies have contributed to the perpetuation of poverty, affecting women and other vulnerable groups more seriously. This position was shared by the Romanian and Polish representatives, who pointed out that there is a need for greater trade union involvement in the design and implementation of poverty reduction policies. This includes the development of relevant poverty indicators, since the World Bank definition and indicators do not capture the real extent of poverty.

The Serbian representative emphasized that addressing the problems of vulnerable groups should be an integral part of trade union efforts to combat poverty at large, requiring them to develop long-term vision and cooperate with other trade unions in the region in this field.

The Macedonian and Serbian representatives said that other problems arise due to the inavailability of relevant data on underemployment, the informal economy, unemployment and poverty. This refers to incomplete or missing data in countries of the former Yugoslavia, due to the period of conflict and split of the country.

Many participants emphasized the need for trade unions to enhance their capacity to analyse and negotiate for a better model of national economic and social development with their governments and the IFIs in the fight against poverty. This would include developing measurement indicators, collecting their own data, and further building their own analytical capacities on poverty and social exclusion. The need for stronger cooperation between trade unions and universities was also indicated.

2.3 ILO Policy on Training and Skills Development

Mr Torkel Alfthan, Senior Training Policies Specialist, ILO Skills Department, Training Policies and Programmes Group

Mr Alfthan gave a brief overview of recent trends in policy development, legislation, and practices in learning and training. His presentation was based on a recently prepared report on "Law and Practice" for the constituents of the ILO, the first output in its work on a new Human Resources Development Recommendation. The current shift towards a knowledge and skills-based society in many countries – under the combined impact of globalization, new technologies, and changes in

work organization and workplace practices – are giving a premium to those workers who are educated and skilled. This premium is in the form of access to decent work and good pay. As countries address the challenge of globalization, they often take a three-pronged approach to education and training. This includes the following measures: (1) raising the basic skills of all citizens and developing their employability, thus overcoming the main causes of vulnerability and social exclusion; (2) developing knowledge and skills that individuals, enterprises and countries need in the increasingly competitive international marketplace; and (3) overcoming the negative social effects of globalization, such as industry and enterprise restructuring, through training and retraining programmes. In the context of affirming the individual's right to education and training, systems of *basic education and initial training* are being strengthened. The duration of basic, compulsory schooling is being extended, workplace learning is being integrated into formal education, apprenticeship systems are undergoing modernization, and systems of skills assessment and recognition are improving.

New institutional arrangements underpin these efforts, e.g. by means of decentralization and vesting decision-making and accountability in local communities, parents and NGOs. Ambitiously, countries are also creating systems of continuous and lifelong learning, considered essential as globalization and technological change gather pace and create a need for continuous retooling of skills and knowledge. Social dialogue and collective bargaining have been the favoured means to address the challenges of lifelong learning.

Other significant international trends include the proliferation of partnerships in order to raise investments and share responsibilities in training. There is increased emphasis on education and training as the major policy instrument to promote equitable labour market outcomes for all, while avoiding social exclusion, for example through active labour market policies and programmes. Competitive pressures place a premium on workplace learning and training as many skills, such as teamwork skills, are best developed in a working environment and often informally. A major public policy challenge is to support enterprise- and workplace-based learning and training activities, making them more equitable.

2.4 Lifelong Learning

Mr Michael Sebastian, Acting Director, ILO Bureau for Workers' Activities

In his presentation, Mr Sebastian explained the definition and scope of lifelong learning (LLL), its economic and social context, its relevance to the ILO, the key issues in the provision of LLL, the role of technology in promoting LLL, and finally areas of ILO support. LLL is a tool for the continuous upgrading of existing knowledge and skills to meet changing needs and opportunities.

The *economic context* of LLL is marked by steady change in the size and structure of economic sectors as a result of global competition, and a need for workers to be more adaptable to new forms of work organization, new jobs and new careers. The *social dimensions* creating a need for LLL include increased vulnerability to social exclusion as a result of low levels of knowledge and skills acquisition, and a need

to compensate for unequal access to education and training opportunities in the formal schooling system. Regarding the *scope* of LLL, it begins in the pre-school system and continues throughout an individual's active life, in both formal and non-formal programmes. In addition to economic and employment imperatives, it embraces democratic participation, personal fulfilment and recreational learning.

LLL has a high relevance to the ILO, as it offers potential benefits to each of the ILO's tripartite partners. It is a tool for achieving the equity objectives of the ILO's Decent Work Agenda, and it is closely associated with the social dialogue process.

Developing and sustaining LLL systems implies a transformation in the basic concepts regarding the nature of education, training and learning. There is a need to strengthen the foundation for LLL in initial education and training, and to create alternative learning pathways for individuals between education, training and work – as well as to establish strategic partnerships between public and private sector producers and users.

The role of technology in LLL is very important because it can provide a means for delivering learning to more people, and enhancing the quality of learning. Through the Internet and e-learning platforms, it is now possible to deliver comprehensive training programmes and support materials to (almost) anyone, (almost) anywhere at (almost) any time. Through the incorporation of multimedia content and interactive methods, training is being transformed from a largely passive, one-way process to a dynamic and highly participatory learning experience. The ILO supports its constituents by advising governments and social partners on LLL policies and strategies based on ILO standards and comparative experiences; by developing open and flexible learning methods, materials and technologies; and through training and technical assistance to promote LLL and support its implementation.

2.4.1 Summary of Discussion

The Polish representative raised the issue of the fundamental changes on labour markets in Eastern Europe, where lifetime employment is no longer available, emphasizing a need for workers to change their attitudes and be prepared not only to change their workplace but also their profession several times during their active lives. Changes in Polish legislation now provide for employers' support in providing training to workers. Employment offices have also started to organize training programmes, and positive steps have been made to design and assess these programmes through tripartite consultation. There is, however, a need to rethink existing forms of adult education. Efforts to promote LLL are still piecemeal in Poland. Appropriate conditions for the functioning of continuous adult education should be established – including the introduction of new methods and forms of education (e.g. distance learning), the adjustment of teaching methods to new tasks (modernization), and preparing workers to perform new and different tasks.

The representative of Montenegro pointed out that funding for education has been drastically reduced over the last decade, and said there are concerns over the impact of structural adjustment programmes on education spending. Alternative funding opportunities do not exist in Montenegro at present, and this is likely to have negative long-term implications for individuals and the economy.

Another important issue raised was motivation for LLL. The Romanian representative pointed out that unless more and better job opportunities are created, motivation for continuous education and LLL may be weak. Young people dropping out of school is a recently observed phenomenon, and has contributed to the already high rate of youth unemployment. Discrimination against women in the labour market also affects motivation for continuing education and retraining.

The representative of Bosnia-Herzegovina raised concerns over the consequences of war and the subsequent poor economic situation, which has resulted in the development of a huge informal economy. The poor quality of jobs available neither matches the high level of education in the workforce nor provides a stimulus for LLL. Agreeing with this point, the representative from the Ukraine said that in his country a similar situation is motivating young educated people to emigrate. In addition, since training needs change constantly, they should be assessed quickly, in consultation with the social partners.

The Czech representative emphasized the need for more flexible training and educational institutional arrangements, and the importance of promoting social dialogue on LLL. This is happening in the Czech Republic, where there are two trade union representatives in the committee dealing with LLL in accordance with the "White Paper on Training and Education".

The ILO representative said that trade unions have a major role to play in society, including the field of education, citing the example of "folk-schools" in Sweden. The era of lifelong employment is over, and because of dynamic changes trade unions must look more closely at the creation and sustainability of jobs. To succeed at this, he continued, trade unions must play an effective role in national planning. More active participation and a greater role for trade unions is needed.

2.5 The Role of Trade Unions in CEE in Human Resource Training and Development

Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova, Senior Specialist in Workers' Activities, ILO Budapest

Ms Dimitrova's presentation focused on structural and attitudinal factors affecting human resource development and training in the process of transition to a market economy, and on trade union response to emerging challenges. She emphasized that major structural factors, such as economic restructuring and privatization, have had an adverse impact on human resource development, and that trade unions are not yet well prepared to address these issues. On the one hand, restructuring and privatization were conducive to sluggish or unsustainable economic growth, lower demand for labour, higher unemployment and the expansion of precarious, poor quality jobs in the informal economy. On the other hand, the challenge stems from new work organization practices that pose new demands for skilled labour. There are a growing number of the working poor in both the formal and informal economy in most countries in the region. Impoverishment is posing financial and attitudinal barriers to employability. The emerging culture of poverty and apathy is coupled with the "thwarted ambitions" of workers due to the poor

quality of jobs available – with low job security and pay, and no opportunities for advancement. A resurgence of illiteracy and child labour are other troublesome phenomena in some countries. Discrimination in employment against disadvantaged groups is exacerbated by problems with their access to training.

It was emphasized that given the relatively high level of education in the region and persistent aspirations for high educational attainment, the negative trends accompanying transition may be countered with a policy mix of employment generation and human resource development and training. It is broadly accepted that investment in education and training is a key to economic and social development. Rapid and proactive steps taken by trade unions can contribute significantly to this process. Trade unions' efforts to support policies boosting demand for labour need to be accompanied by aggressive intervention in the design and implementation of human resource development and training policies. The two processes are indeed integrated and inseparable.

So far, there has been no real decentralization of decision-making on human resource development and training. Instead, there is a vacuum due to the state's abandonment of its former centralized functions in education and training, and a lack of viable social dialogue on these issues to date. The importance of shared responsibility, a participatory approach and strengthened expertise for the social partners was strongly emphasized. The legal and institutional framework for the involvement of trade unions in social dialogue on human resource development at the various levels and on a wide range of related issues was also discussed. There is a need for trade union policy encouraging lifelong learning aimed at enhancing the development of individuals, communities and societies. The value of building bipartite dialogue with employers' organizations was also highlighted.

2.6 Belgian Experience in Training for Vulnerable Groups

Mr Eddy Van Lancker, Regional Secretary of ABVV West-Vlaanderen, Belgium

Mr Van Lancker's presentation consisted of two parts. The first was devoted to the major institutional framework of social dialogue in Belgium in general, including the handling of training issues. The second part dealt with trade union policies towards vulnerable groups of workers.

Special Programmes of FGTB for the Labour Market Integration of Vulnerable Groups

FGTB makes persistent efforts to help all unemployed persons. The union provides them with information, training and job search guidance. Within FGTB structures, the unemployed are given a voice, by asking their opinions and striving for their representation in the trade union.

FGTB also has special programmes to address the problems of female workers. Measures were adopted to facilitate the participation of women in trade union

meetings, considering their "double burden". In addition, a Network for Women was set up, encouraging women workers to meet informally. FGTB offers women five meetings a year, held during the day. FGTB also organizes a special day for all women activists to meet. It is expected that over time, the expansion of this type of informal network will result in the more active participation of women in the structures of FGTB, leading to stronger representation of their interests.

The youth section of FGTB offers services to students and young people relating to their rights and duties as students, working students, young workers and unemployed persons. The union helps students with information about possible scholarships, apprenticeships and other opportunities. Young workers also receive assistance in job placement. Special efforts are made to recruit members among young people, to make them aware of their social, cultural and economic rights, and to encourage them to fight for their rights. FGTB is trying to earn the confidence of young people based on principles and values, making them aware of the organization and history of trade unions in general and FGTB in particular. Central themes in 2002 were child labour, Europe and globalization, education, and an anti-racism campaign. Young people from 12 to 30 years old are targeted in these actions.

FGTB also pays special attention to migrant workers, as its objective is to defend the interests of every worker and everyone who benefits from social security – regardless of religion, origin or sexual orientation. The fight against racism and discrimination is one of the most important tasks of the union, and is not merely ideological. FGTB also supports trade union education and training programs, and positive actions in enterprises.

2.6.1 Summary of Discussion

The representative of Serbia stressed the need for trade unions to have an active policy in the field of human resource development (HRD). All participants in dialogue – governments, trade unions and employers – should be aware of how they can benefit from HRD. The Romanian representative described the situation in his country, where there is a National Agency for Vocational Training – a tripartite body in which both trade unions and employers are represented. The institutional effort to decentralize discussions has still not met with great success, however, as the government is still not open to suggestions made by the other two parties.

The Belgian representative gave further clarifications as to the role of trade unions in the system of skills development. In Belgium, trade unions monitor jobs in danger of being eliminated, and the workers at risk are enrolled in training schemes. Every industry has its own training centre, and trade unions not only monitor the process but also give opinions about the introduction of new technologies.

The Czech representative shared the experience of Czech trade unions, which are able to participate in solving problems concerning the labour market, because the legal system gives them this possibility. The decentralization of social dialogue took place along with administrative decentralization, and it was possible to create a social-economic agreement at the regional level (on which the unions worked together with employers). Employment offices in the Czech Republic are legally obliged to create counselling bodies, in which trade union representatives must be present. These bodies, among others, comment on the contents of policy pro-

grammes and the organization of training and requalification.

Several participants raised the issue of the absence of adequate methods of skills assessment and recognition. The recognition of skills acquired outside the formal system of education is an issue that requires special attention throughout the region, as new training providers emerge, and the amount of informal or on-the-job training increases. The ILO expert explained that because there is no standardization in qualifications in the region, it is important for trade unions to initiate development of this issue in their own countries so that systems may now be set up. It is also important to include employers in this process.

2.7 ETUC Perspective on Lifelong Learning and the Role of Social Partners

Mr Antonio Giacché, ETUC

In his presentation, Mr Giacché gave a European background on LLL and explained the ETUC's position. The political mainstreaming of renewed interest in LLL has already started in Europe. The objectives of establishing a European area of LLL are to empower all citizens and enable Europe to achieve its major objectives for growth, social inclusion, full employment and democracy; and to involve all individuals, irrespective of age or condition, encompassing both formal and non-formal learning, such as that acquired at the work place. All actors at the European and national levels agree that knowledge and LLL are main methods for coping with the ambitious project the EU set for itself at the Lisbon Summit. It is nevertheless a fact that despite the many initiatives that have been launched, the present situation is very far from satisfactory.

The ETUC is aware of the many challenges linked to the shift towards a knowledge-based society, and it intends to share responsibility with other social partners to meet these challenges. The ETUC is committed to arriving at a framework agreement with the representatives of European private (UNICE) and public (CEEP) employers' organizations on competences and qualifications. The key points of trade union strategy include three structural conditions that will make LLL possible – a means to secure access to LLL, increased investment in human resources, and a new partnership concept.

Since 1991, the ETUC has insisted with employers' organizations at the European level on the negotiation of a framework agreement to promote access to LLL. Ten years later, this process finally got underway. The European Social Dialogue Group was established in 2001, and the document "Framework of actions for LLL development of competences and qualifications" was approved in February 2002 and presented at the Barcelona Summit in March. Through this "Framework of actions", the European social partners agreed on the following four priorities: (1) identifying and anticipating competences and qualifications needed at the enterprise, national and/or sectoral levels; (2) recognizing and validating competences and qualifications; (3) informing, supporting and providing guidance; and (4) mobilizing resources.

In his final comments, Mr Giacché stressed that the ETUC has agreed from the beginning that enlargement is the most challenging process that the EU has ever faced, because it will underpin democracy, peace and stability for all of Europe, and means the potential to foster economic and social progress throughout the continent. The ETUC is convinced that the social partners, and especially trade unions, have a very important role to play in the ongoing process, namely to promote employment and upgrade its quality, to ensure or establish adequate social rights and protection, and to fight against exclusion and social or geographical divides.

2.7.1 Summary of Discussion

Several representatives noted the formal nature of social dialogue on many issues in the region, including training and education. This creates obstacles to elaborating coherent policies on LLL as well. The issue of differences in the levels of economic development and job opportunities between old EU members and accession countries was also raised. If the situation continues, then some employers may resolve the existing skills gap in EU countries by recruiting skilled labour from CEE.

A question was raised about the ETUC position on LLL and individual learning accounts – how should these be organized and run? The ETUC representative explained that there was much discussion on this, and the ETUC position is neither for nor against such accounts. It was accepted that the possibility should simply be present, and that practices will differ from one country to another. However, the ETUC does not find it acceptable that the main responsibility should lie with workers, thereby reducing the primary role and responsibility of public authorities and employers in the area of training.

3 PANEL DISCUSSIONS

3.1 Training Policy for Women Workers

Ms Alena Nesporova, Senior Labour Economist, ILO Employment Strategy Department

In her introductory statement, Ms Nesporova first outlined the labour market situation of women workers in transition countries. In terms of labour market participation and unemployment, women are not consistently worse off than men in these countries. However, women tend to be discriminated against in layoffs, hiring for better-paid jobs, and promotion – particularly in the private sector. They are often forced to accept precarious contracts and low-paid jobs, with the result that the gender wage gap tends to increase in most countries. There are even less women in higher managerial and professional positions than in the past, despite the fact that women are still better educated on average than men.

Young women are also often confronted with the choice between family and career, as long parental leave and childcare disadvantages them in the eyes of employers, who are unwilling to invest in their training and promote them at work. Similarly, older women are more disadvantaged than older men due to their lower retirement age. To address these problems, women should have better access to training oriented to the provision of the right skills demanded in the market. Training is particularly important for women on maternity or parental leave, and for women workers with obsolete skills. More women should study technical disciplines, especially ICT and other new technologies, which will greatly enhance their employment opportunities.

Tripartite advisory bodies to governments and labour offices at the national, regional and local levels should guarantee the harmonization of initial and adult training to market demand for skills. They should also undertake to provide equal access to training for all groups of workers, including women workers. Trade unions in enterprises should promote higher training investments and equal access to training in the process of collective bargaining. Finally, there is a need for new policies reconciling work and the family tasks of women workers.

Ms Agnieszka Ghinararu, ICFTU CEE Women's Network

Ms Ghinararu elaborated in greater detail on the issues raised by Ms Nesporova. She presented the outcome of research done by the ICFTU CEE Women's Network in 2000 on women's education. Education of women on the labour market, especially those that are officially employed, is higher than that of male workers. This conclusion is confirmed by data from seven countries.

By calculating the average percentage of employed men with secondary education and a university degree in the total population of men that are employed, data collected from seven countries (the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia) indicate that the population of employed women has on average a significantly higher level of education. The average share of male workers with secondary education is 21.7%, while the average of female workers is 30.2%. In addition, while on average 12.5% of male workers have a university degree, the average for female workers is 14.4%.

It is clear that the "boom" of educated women on the labour market in countries undergoing transition is the result of equality in the approach to education, as well as incentives that existed under socialism (free education, scholarships, free high school and university student dormitories, subsidized student cafeterias, etc.).

Based on joint assessments of employment priorities (JAPs) from Poland, Romania and Hungary, one can notice that in the chapters concerning education and vocational training there are no provisions specifically related to women. Youth, women and men are all treated the same. Interestingly, in the last decade, the educational enrolment ratios of both genders have significantly increased, except those of apprentice and specialized secondary education, which provides only a specialized vocational certificate without a general final examination certificate.

Ms Ghinararu then presented more detail on the situation in Poland, where more women graduate from secondary schools than men, and more of these go on to graduate from university. Indeed, the great majority of secondary school students in Poland are women. Moreover, in recent years, more and more women choose to study subjects that some years ago were thought of as "male" courses of study. For example, more girls have decided to study sciences than did 10 years ago. Still, in secondary technical schools there are more boys than girls. In secondary professional schools, there are still "traditional" divisions concerning "men's jobs" and "women's jobs". Boys finish their education at the secondary level more often than girls, and thus many more girls than boys study at various types of college. More than 56% of graduates from higher education in Poland are women. And the percentage of women deciding to study grows higher every year. In the last 10 years, a few percentage points of growth can be noted among female students of mathe-

matics and information technology. Women also choose studies in the field of business, management and economics more often than previously.

There are two other interesting areas on the labour market – women in the IT sector and telework. The IT sector is still dominated by men – in Poland, only 5.9% of employees in the sector are women. (The average percentage of women in the IT sector was 7% for the CEE region. Hungary was highest with 12%, and Russia lowest with only 4.5%.) Being an IT professional is still generally considered a "male" occupation. But there is a greater future for women with the advent and growth of telework, which allows flexible working hours – a fact that is very important for those with family responsibilities.

Ms Jagoda Milidrag-Smid, UATUC, Croatia

The new circumstances in which trade unions need to operate can be summarized in a few key ideas, according to Ms Milidrag-Smid's presentation. So-called "atypical" forms of work are more and more becoming "typical". Flexibility at work marks an approach and procedures that give the employer the ability to act promptly in response to external influences (e.g. a client's needs or change of economic conditions), and at the same time maximize workers' success and efficiency. This creates a need for workers who are able to adjust and who can switch jobs easily, with sudden changes of tasks and required skills, pay according to results, bonus payment schemes, and so on. Finally, there is strong pressure for labour market deregulation and de-standardization – as multinational employers are increasingly able to "avoid" social cohesion policies by transferring capital to less regulated labour markets. In these conditions, vulnerable groups on the labour market suffer particularly – including women, and especially young women.

Until now, women on the labour market were relatively protected due to segregation within employment. The public sector, where mostly women are employed, has until now been less sensitive to cyclical changes. However, the recent acceleration of the privatization process in Croatia has changed the situation, and increasingly affects women's jobs in the public sector.

Characterizing female employment, we can say that women are treated as a kind of secondary labour force, and therefore female unemployment is considered to be less important than male unemployment. In addition, rates of female activity and employment are lower when compared to male levels, while unemployment rates for women are very often higher than those for men.

Woman's biological function of giving birth to children is socially accepted and even praised. Motherhood and parenthood are socially highly regarded, but economically speaking these roles are very expensive. Women, especially young women, are in a tight spot between demands for an increased birthrate on the one hand and demands for economic efficiency on the other. Women must bear the burden of the conflict that arises between work and family. Basically, this is a conflict between the principle of competition and the principle of solidarity in society. How can a woman fulfil all her family and job duties? How can she reintegrate after maternity leave within conditions of sudden changes that occur in the world of work? How can she stay competitive on the labour market?

To give equal treatment to the unequal is discrimination, just as the unequal treatment of the equal. In other words, vulnerable groups need measures for positive action to reduce inequalities. Against this background, trade unions have an important role to play: to initiate policies facilitating women's entrance, exit and return to and from the labour market; to establish forms of employment and work organization that allow for balance between work and family life; and to promote programmes that help reduce the conflict between paid work and unpaid social care for family members. In addition, they can foster the creation of new educational policies that can set a balance between the right to be a responsible family member on the one hand, and the right to be a productive worker on the other.

In view of present trends and the character of changes, it is necessary to offer new options and models. New technologies and changes in work structures not only pose a risk, they also offer an opportunity: a chance for trade unions to strengthen their understanding of the work process, their professional competitiveness in human resources development, and their influence on forming professional training policies as key preconditions for increasing the employability of workers. Trade unions should insist on building institutional links among themselves, employers and governments in order to create education and professional training in accordance with economic needs at the local level. At the national level, unions should actively participate in the reform of the educational system and training programmes, and their adjustment not only in terms of content, but also in terms of the methods and forms of education. It seems crucial to ensure the horizontal "free float" of the educational system – i.e. its capacity to reintegrate those who have fallen out of the system due to their circumstances, and to formalize knowledge and skills acquired in an informal manner. Last but not least, knowledge and the opportunity to use it should be available to everyone. Lifelong learning is a trade union imperative!

3.1.1 Summary of Discussion

The Czech representative described the adverse impact of Czech trade unions' efforts to improve working conditions for women. When unions attempted to ban night time work for women, they lost members as a result, because women resented losing their benefits for working during night hours. As this illustrates, it is important for trade unions to engage in discussions with their female members, and to lead educational efforts before undertaking steps that would affect their work.

The representative from Montenegro noted that the position of women, not only on the labour market but in Montenegrin society at large, is far from equal. While sex discrimination does not exist in legal terms, it does in practice – and trade unions should not ignore the fact that there is wasted potential that could be utilized by society. Overrepresentation of women in the informal sector, where they work without contracts or under precarious conditions, is a serious problem.

The Romanian representative raised the issue of a "male-centred" world of work as technologies are more suited to men than women. Trade unions should also press for the redefinition of health and safety regulations in light of women's needs, and in ways that would not foster discrimination.

The Ukrainian representative expressed concern over problems faced by male workers in some parts of the country. He emphasized that in different regions the situation of women in the labour market varies depending on the type of industry. In the western part of the country, for example, men are now the "vulnerable" group, suffering from unemployment and frustration, as the light industries employ primarily women. In a way, all workers in Ukraine can be seen as vulnerable, since even if they have jobs, they are paid extremely low salaries and live in poverty. There is a need for strong policies to boost economic growth and employment for both men and women.

The ILO expert agreed that structural changes in CEE countries have resulted in massive losses of previously typical "male" jobs, and that male workers have specific concerns that must be addressed in the process of transition. At the same time, trade unions should still pay special attention to women, who often suffer double and triple disadvantages based on their sex, age and ethnicity. Collective bargaining remains an under-utilized tool in addressing discrimination.

3.2 Training Policy for Young Workers

Mr Torkel Alfthan, Senior Training Policies Specialist, Skills Development Department, ILO

Mr Alfthan gave an overview of youth unemployment trends from an international perspective, examining some possible causes of often high and persistent youth unemployment in many parts of the world. He also gave examples of education, training institutions and programmes that have proven successful in making school-to-work transition smoother for young people and maintaining their unemployment rates at low levels. Mr Alfthan pointed out that global youth unemployment is growing: it affected some 66 million young people in 1999–2000. In some developing and transition economies, it has become endemic, but a few countries have nevertheless managed to start reversing this trend recently. Youth (un)employment levels are closely related to the general economic and employment situation, and to aggregate labour demand in a country. Factors such as high youth wages relative to those of adults, a longer time spent by young people than adults on the job search, and the quality of education and training can also influence the level of youth unemployment.

In addressing the problem, Mr Alfthan stressed the importance of buttressing polices that boost labour demand with micro-policies that influence the quality of labour supply, such as through education and training. He referred to examples of training programmes and institutions that had proven successful in assisting young people in gaining a foothold in the labour market. In particular, Germany's "dual" training system combines school-based education with workplace-based training, and leads to recognized professional qualifications for participants in the system. Mr Alfthan also referred to Japan, where strong recruitment linkages between schools and employers contribute to keeping youth unemployment at low levels.

Mr Péter Bányai, ICFTU Youth Network

One of the critical areas requiring attention if job opportunities for young people are to be improved is the transition from school to work. Millions of young people lack adequate training, education, information and guidance when they enter the labour market. This is often the reason for a mismatch between school and work, which leads to unemployment, underemployment and social exclusion.

Improving the transition from school to work for young people requires specific measures, such as:

- Adequate school curricula that reflect the requirements young people meet when entering the labour market
- An improved labour market information system to enable students, first-time job seekers and unemployed young people to (1) make informed choices concerning their education and working lives, and (2) increase their chances of a smooth entrance to the labour market
- Special youth training centers to provide guidance and training to "drop-outs" and young job seekers

Education is a right of all children and young people, and it is the task of trade unions to defend this right. Education enables youth to fully participate within society, and to have better access to work. It breaks the vicious circle of poverty and exclusion. Trade union action is essential to ensure that all children and young people have access to education and training. Special policies and programmes will be necessary to prevent children from going to work rather than school.

Trade unions – both internally as a movement and as a force in shaping the country within which they operate – must also face the dramatic aging problem within their membership and attract young new members. At the same time, they must become key players in building the framework for a better future with young people.

Youth employment has been identified by the CEE Youth Network as one of the key concerns for both the employment and education policies of governments within the region. Inadequate training and education of young people that does not match the needs of the labour market has been pinpointed as a major problem. As a result of this discrepancy, more and more people are forced to work in jobs that do not match their skills (e.g. lawyers working as waiters), to work in the informal economy, or to migrate. Countries suffer both from "brain drain" and an aging population with few young people to rebuild or sustain them.

In addressing these problems, trade unions need to work together with young people in creating and proposing new strategies and policies to open the pathway for young people to job opportunities that will provide decent work, and ensure access to affordable and quality education and training.

Trade unions should urge governments and international governmental organizations to take appropriate action to:

- Guarantee that all children and young people have access to primary and secondary education and training

- Set up positive action strategies to ensure equal access for girls and young women to education, vocational guidance, training and retraining
- Avoid cuts in education and training resources as governments implement structural reforms and budgetary reductions.

Finally, it should be noted that trade unions generally recognize that their young members – the regional CEE Youth Network and the ICFTU Youth Committee, at the international level – are key resources for national trade union centres in tackling this issue. Cooperation with these organizations, combined with the expertise of the ILO, can ensure that trade unions assume their place as key players in developing training policy for young workers.

Mr Dušan Martinek, ČMKOS, Czech Republic

Mr Martinek gave an overview of the history and current policy of ČMKOS with regard to young workers.

Date	ČMKOS developments in youth work
November 1996	ČMKOS's department of education organizes first joint meeting of trade union members under age 35
February 1997	"Preparatory group for work with youth" established within the department of education
February 2000	ČMKOS Youth Council set up as a consultative body for the confederation, with its own status, organizational regulations and work plan
January 2001	ČMKOS Youth Council becomes independent body for youth problems, with elected president and secretary

Legislation

The legal framework for education and youth affairs in the Czech Republic is incorporated in the following laws and regulations: the Constitution, the Education Act, and the Higher Education Act. Regulations concerning lifelong learning are under preparation.

ČMKOS participates in social dialogue regarding the problems of youth at the national level in the tripartite "Working team for education, human resources development and youth." This is an advisory and negotiation body, as well as a platform to initiate the preparation of legislative proposals. It is composed of three representatives each from ministries, ČMKOS and employers.

ČMKOS has prepared its own "system of education" composed of programmes aimed at increasing or completing qualifications (re-qualification courses), raising the level of education (passing maturity exams, acquiring a university degree, etc.) and providing courses for personal development. The ČMKOS Youth Council participates actively in this education system.

Problems

Many problems remain, however. These include the financing of national and trade union systems of education, and the lack of motivation on the part of young people to participate in education activities.

Conclusion, Suggestions for Future Action

- Allocate resources to cover all educational activities on the national and trade union level, through the budget and other means.
- Focus on recruiting new young members in trade union organizations, and through this address generation problems as well as funding issues.
- Strengthen the motivation of young persons to upgrade their level of education and change qualifications as a means of integrating into the labour market.
- Participate in further discussions on the legal framework for lifelong learning, with a special focus on reinforcing social dialogue in this area.

3.2.1 Summary of Discussion

The Polish representative raised the issue of short-term contracts that are often used while employing young persons, women or persons with disabilities as a reason for the deepening segmentation of the labour market. The ambitions of many young workers are thwarted as they are often overeducated for the new jobs created in both the formal and informal economy. Similar problems exist in Romania, where young workers are also forced to work without contracts in the informal economy. The poor quality of jobs available falls short of the expectations of educated young Romanians.

The Moldovan representative shared concerns over the government's neglect of the problems of youth and education, which leave young people to their own resources to solve the challenges of finding jobs and developing their careers. Education is becoming increasingly expensive, and thus inaccessible to some. For many young people, the only solution is to leave the country. It is estimated that almost one fifth of the population has left Moldova during the last decade, with young educated people over-represented in the exodus. Trade unions have no power to influence the government to change this dramatic trend.

The Estonian representative pointed at the problem of frustration among young people from another perspective. There is an "overproduction" of white collar workers (especially lawyers, economists, etc.) who cannot find jobs, while many young people do not want to do manual or "low prestige" work any longer. Thus, there is a need for society to reconsider the "values" it attaches to different occupations.

3.3 Training Policy for Persons with Disabilities

Ms Barbara Murray, Manager – Equity Issues, ILO Skills Development Department

Ms Murray gave an overview of international trends in training policies for disabled persons, against the background of fundamental changes that have taken place in the definition of disability in recent years. Noting that people with disabilities constitute a heterogenous group with varying degrees of support required to take part in training, work and society in general, she highlighted the current emphasis on the removal of social barriers to participation of disabled persons in all aspects of society. Such obstacles arise from provisions in laws, policies, rules, regulations and procedures, as well as negative attitudes. Additional problems are barriers to access, such as physically inaccessible buildings and public transport, and the presentation and dissemination of information in inaccessible formats.

The main policy trend in recent years has been a greater emphasis on the inclusion of people with disabilities in society. This is reflected in the move towards the integration of people with disabilities into mainstream training programmes, and in the increasing range of training options open to this group. These options include on the job training (e.g. through supported employment), formal and informal apprenticeships, training for self-employment and distance learning based on information and communications technologies (ICT).

Training continues to take place mainly in special centres, catering solely to people with disabilities, with policy measures introduced in many countries to bring about an improvement in the standard and relevance of training provided in such centres. Where people with disabilities attend mainstream training, support services are sometimes required to ensure that they benefit effectively. Policy provisions are increasingly made for such services in many countries, sometimes backed by legislation. Issues concerning the training of people with disabilities include:

- Catchment – is everyone being reached?
- Relevance – does training reflect labour market needs and lead to a job?
- Training standards in special centres – are they acceptable?
- Induction training for mainstream vocational training instructors – are they adequately prepared to include people with disabilities in their classes?
- Availability of support
- Adequacy of infrastructure for ICT-based distance learning
- Access to workplace training, retraining and continuous training

Ms Murray pointed to the important role workers' organizations might play in promoting training policies for people with disabilities. This can take the form of advocacy and negotiation at the national, sector and enterprise levels, monitoring and overseeing the implementation of training policy, promoting the participation of people with disabilities in union activities, and providing advice and concrete assistance through union-sponsored services.

On a practical level, she recommended that initially, a trade union should learn more about the issues, develop a clear policy statement, consult and represent workers with disabilities, and appoint disability officers. Other important steps include providing training for union staff on disability-related matters, making union buildings and services more accessible to people with different types of disabilities, monitoring unions' own performance, setting up and implementing a bargaining agenda, and becoming a good practice employer of people with disabilities.

Mr Jozef Vanický, Vice President, Association of Disabled Persons, Czech Republic

Introduction of the Organization

- Established in 1990 as a legal successor of the Association of Invalids of the Czech Republic.
- The major affiliated organizations are: Association of the Physically Disabled, Integrated Organization of the Blind and Weak-sighted, Association of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Association Helping Persons with Mental Disabilities, Association of Parents and Friends of Disabled Children, Association for the Environment of Disabled Persons – in total, approximately 200,000 members.
- Legal status: civic association.
- Basic activities: coordination of member organizations' activities, providing compound care and services for persons with disabilities, representing disabled people's rights, and promoting the collective interests and needs of disabled persons.

Among the priorities of the Association are problems regarding the employment of persons with disabilities. In particular, the Association:

- Provides opinions on legislation for persons with disabilities, in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Culture
- Cooperates with government institutions, such as the Social and Health Policy Committee of Parliament and the government committee for people with disabilities.

Concrete Programmes

- International seminar held jointly with the FIMITIC on "Employment of disabled people in transition countries".
- Expert support provided for "HANDICAP", a special exhibition for people with disabilities (part of the international health technology trade fair PRAGOMEDICA). In 2001, the exhibition's theme was the forms and methods of training and education for disabled persons. In 2003, the topic foreseen is lifelong learning – the opportunity for disabled people to improve their prospects on the labour market.
- Cooperation with other partners in the area of education for disabled persons and of people working with or providing services to the disabled. This entails cooperation with schools and special workplaces while implementing concrete projects, as well as providing courses and training activities accred-

ited by the Ministry of Education for representatives from regional service centres for disabled persons.

- Collaboration with institutions seeking and providing job opportunities, such as the firm Computer Press, which offers free of charge mediation between the disabled and approximately 3000 companies offering jobs.

- Retraining and re-qualification courses, as well as courses on integration or adaptability to normal life, offered by individual member organizations.

Proposals for Joint Future Action

Strengthening the cooperation between trade union structures and organizations of the disabled in individual countries, with the help of a database including information on partner organizations. Programmes could be developed particularly through the exchange of experience and cooperation on educational and training projects.

3.3.1 Summary of Discussion

The Croatian representative shared her country's experience, where trade unions work together with NGOs dealing with the problems of persons with disabilities. A special section in the UATUC has been established to work with these people. Nevertheless, this effort needs to be strengthened further, as there is still not sufficient understanding within trade unions of the needs of persons with disabilities. The Czech representative raised the issue of needs assessment for disabled persons, a process in which the latter group must be fully involved.

The Macedonian representative added that previous sheltered workplaces disappeared during the transition process, and have not been replaced by any other relevant mechanism to address the needs of disabled people. This has forced them into social isolation and exclusion. In Macedonia, parents of disabled children recently organized themselves and staged protests against the hostile environment for disabled persons in the country. Trade unions should cooperate with such organizations, she pointed out.

The Czech representative supported the idea of a proactive stance. For example, he said that blind people organized a demonstration in front of the Czech government building, as a result of which the government decided to maintain a provision for the support of guide dogs, which was in danger of being cut.

Participants stressed the need to change attitudes towards people with disabilities, with a positive example given from a Czech region, where trade unions cooperate with an association for children with disabilities. The ILO representative concluded the discussion by stressing the importance of providing opportunities for non-disabled persons to get to know disabled persons. This is crucial in order to dismantle the largest barrier for people with disabilities – the lack of understanding, information and contacts.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The drafting committee – consisting of representatives from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Montenegro, Poland, Romania, Serbia, the ICFTU CEE Women's Network and the ILO – developed a draft proposal for the seminar conclusions. The draft was presented and discussed during the plenary session, where the participants made their comments and introduced changes, as reflected in the document that follows.

CONCLUSIONS

The seminar participants urge national governments in the sub-region to encourage more and better investment into education and training of workers for decent work. Such investment should be supported by institutions, policies and programmes that create the conditions for national economic and employment growth.

The seminar participants emphasize that sustainable economic and employment growth is an important precondition for improving the labour market situation of vulnerable groups.

National governments should encourage social partners – trade unions and employers' organizations – to engage in effective social dialogue and collective agreements on the education and training of workers.

Trade unions commit themselves to working together with governments and employers on the formulation and implementation of education and training policies.

1. Strengthening workers' organizations

- Recruiting new members in the private sector and among SMEs, focusing in particular on the recruitment of vulnerable groups
- Addressing the needs of workers in the informal economy, paying particular attention to young workers, women and persons with disabilities
- Strengthening collective bargaining capacities and techniques
- Consolidating national trade union movements, improving cooperation in general, and coordinating efforts on issues related to vulnerable groups in particular
- Strengthening women's and youth sections within trade union confederations
- Strengthening disabled workers' sections where they exist within trade union confederations, and encouraging their establishment in others, ensuring that a technical support service is developed
- Building cooperation and networking with other agents of civil society, including NGOs dealing with gender, youth and persons with disabilities

2. Capacity building to strengthen trade union expertise in human resources development (HRD) and training

- Awareness raising among trade union leadership concerning the importance of a participatory approach and the potential benefits of involvement in HRD and training
- Prioritizing and allocating financial and human resources to training and education policy development, assuming responsibility together with other stakeholders
- Strengthening expertise in the area of general economic policy and labour market issues, and building solid knowledge of HRD and training (through strengthening links with universities and promoting trade union research)
- Building strong expertise in addressing the HRD and training needs of vulnerable groups
- Enhancing the motivation of trade union experts to engage in analysis and policy formulation on training

3. Strengthening trade unions' participation in social dialogue on education and training policies at the national level

- Promoting effective operation of tripartite institutions of social dialogue at the national level
- Endeavouring to participate as an equal partner in tripartite dialogue on economic, social and human resources development issues in an integrated manner
- Contributing with strong expertise to the work of the various committees of these institutions (dealing with economic policy, employment issues and training, mainstreaming the issues of vulnerable groups)

- Enhancing the knowledge and skills of trade union experts to better represent the interests of vulnerable groups in the area of human resources development and training

- Lobbying for the revision of the legal and institutional framework for social dialogue on education and training (legal regulations, powers, operation, financing of capacity building for social partners, improving data collection, etc.) in order to improve structures and enhance the participation of social partners

- Promoting adequate government policy aimed at improving and increasing investment in training by all stakeholders, and emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning for individuals' well-being, community prosperity and national development alike

- Contributing to policy development and strengthening of education and training institutions, as well as workplace-based training, in order to ensure effective school-to-work transition for young people

4. Strengthening collective bargaining and building social dialogue on learning and training at the sector and enterprise levels

- Engaging in collective bargaining at the sector and enterprise levels, including stronger representation of vulnerable groups in the negotiating teams. Such collective bargaining should encompass issues such as:

  - Ensuring equal access of all workers, including women, workers with disabilities, young people and other vulnerable groups, to skills required by the enterprise and the economy

  - Training, retraining and continuous training for all workers

  - Assessment and recognition of non-formal learning of basic skills

  - Development of career paths for all workers

  - Individual training and development plans for all workers

  - Facilities and support services needed to ensure the maximum benefits from learning and training

  - Recognition and reward schemes, including remuneration incentives

5. The role of regional and international cooperation

- The ILO should explore the possibility of providing further technical assistance in the area of training and education policies.

- International trade union cooperation should be strengthened, aimed at the exchange of good practices.

5 APPENDICES

5.1 Seminar Programme

Trade Union Seminar on Training Policy of Vulnerable Groups in Central and Eastern European Countries
Prague, 24–26 June 2002

Saturday, 22 June 2002

Arrival of participants

Sunday, 23 June 2002

Transfer to training centre of ČMKOS

Monday, 24 June 2002

9:00 Registration

9:30 Opening and welcome

Mr Milan Štěch, President, ČMKOS
Mr Michael Sebastian, Acting Director, Bureau for Workers' Activities, ILO

10:00 Objectives of the seminar

Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova, Senior Specialist for Workers' Activities, ILO Budapest

10:15 *Coffee break*

10:45 Labour market situation and active policies for disadvantaged groups in Central and Eastern Europe

Ms Alena Nesporova, Senior Labour Economist, ILO Employment Strategy Department

Social exclusion of vulnerable groups

Mr Yannis Yfantopoulos, Professor of Health Economics and Social Policy, University of Athens

General discussion

12:45 *Lunch break*

14:15 ILO policy on training and skills development

Mr Torkel Alfthan, Senior Training Policies Specialist, ILO Skills Development Department

Points for discussion

- Literacy, basic education and training for all. Which education and training policies should be pursued in order to develop individuals' employability and core work skills?
- Training policy and system reform. How can learning and training programmes be made more responsive to rapidly changing economic and social needs? Are trade unions in CEE countries equipped to participate fully in shaping education and training policies for the knowledge economy? How can their contribution be enhanced?

Discussion

16:00 *Coffee break*

16:30 Lifelong learning (LLL)

Mr Michael Sebastian, ILO

Points for discussion

- What kind of economic and social environment is conducive to LLL?
- Why is LLL relevant in transition countries?
- What is the implication of technological development for LLL?

Discussion

Tuesday, 25 June 2002

9:00 The role of trade unions in Central and Eastern Europe in human resource development and training

Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova, ILO

Points for discussion

- To what extent and at what levels are trade unions involved in the design and implementation of education and training policies in your country?
- What are the major obstacles to trade union participation in the design and implementation of education and training policies in your country?

- What could be done to strengthen the participation of trade unions and to increase the employability of workers through training?

Discussion

10:00 Panel discussion on training policy for women workers

Ms Alena Nesporova, ILO
Ms Agnieszka Ghinararu, ICFTU Gender Network Representative
Ms Jagoda Milidrag-Smid, Advisor on Social Issues, UATUC

Points for discussion

- How can female job seekers and women workers with obsolete skills be given better access to training programmes offering employable skills?
- How can access to training of disadvantaged groups of women – such as those with small children and older women – be improved, and how can training programmes be modified to meet their special needs?
- What role can trade unions play in promoting effective training opportunities for women?

Discussion

11:15 Coffee break

11:45 Panel discussion on training policy for young workers

Mr Torkel Alfthan, ILO
Mr Péter Bányai, ICFTU Youth Network
Mr Dušan Martinek, Head of Education Department, ČMKOS

Points for discussion

- What are the major factors that account for high levels of youth unemployment in CEE countries?
- What combination of economic, employment and education and training policies should be pursued in order to ensure the successful integration of young people into working life? How can trade unions maximize their contribution to formulating and implementing these policies?
- Skills recognition enhances job mobility in the labour market and young people's access to decent jobs. What role should trade unions play in promoting the recognition of skills and prior learning?

Discussion

13:00 Lunch break

14:00 Panel discussion on training policy for persons with disabilities

Ms Barbara Murray, Manager - Equity Issues, ILO Skills Development Department
Mr Jozef Vanický, Vice President, Association of Disabled People, Czech Republic

Points for discussion

- What policies and programmes are required to ensure that people with disabilities receive training in employable skills?

- What support services should be put in place to ensure that people with disabilities successfully complete training?
- What role can workers' organizations play in promoting effective training opportunities for persons with disabilities?

Discussion

16:00 *Coffee break*

16:30 Drafting committee

Wednesday, 26 June 2002

9:00 Belgian experience in training for vulnerable groups
Mr Eddy Van Lancker, Regional Secretary, ABVV West-Vlaanderen, FGTB

9:30 ETUC perspective on lifelong learning and the role of social partners
Mr Antonio Giacché, Advisor, ETUC

Discussion

10:30 *Coffee break*

11:00 Conclusions and recommendations

12:30 Closing session

13:00 *Lunch*

Departure of participants

5.2 List of participants

ALBANIA

KSSH
Ms Florentina Shiroka
Responsible for Organizing and Training
Address: Pallati i Kultures "Ali Kelmendi" Kati i 3te, Tirana, Albania
Telephone/fax: (+355 4) 222-956
E-mail address: kssh@icc.al.eu.org

BOSNIA-HERZEGOVINA

CITUBH
Mr Sulejman Hrle
Advisor
Address: Obala 1, 71000 Sarajevo, Bosnia-Herzegovina
Telephone: (+387 33) 664-872
Fax: (+387 33) 664-872
E-mail address: sinbih@bih.net.ba

SSRS
Ms Ljiljana Žigic
Secretary of Women's Section
Address: Sprska 32, 78 000 Banja Luka
Telephone: (+387 51) 310-711
Fax: (+387 51) 304-241

BULGARIA

KNSB
Ms Atanaska Todorova
Co-President of Youth Forum 21st Century
Address: 1 Place Macedonia, 1040 Sofia, Bulgaria
Telephone: (+359 2) 917-0504
Fax: (+359 2) 988-5969
E-mail address: knsb@knsb-bg.org

Podkrepa
Mr Vasil Vasilev
Expert
Address: 2 Anghel Kanchev Str., 1000 Sofia, Bulgaria
Telephone: (+359 2) 981-4551, 980-7766
Fax: (+359 2) 981-3298
E-mail address:
international_department@podkrepa.org

CROATIA

UATUC
Ms Jagoda Milidrag-Smid
Advisor on Social Issues
Address: Trg Kralja Petra, Kresimira IV, br 2, 10 000 Zagreb, Croatia
Telephone: (+385 1) 46-55-026
Fax: (+385 1) 46-55-011
E-mail address: international-uatuc@sssh.hr

CZECH REPUBLIC

ČMKOS
Mr Milan Štěch
President
Address: Nám. W. Churchilla 2, 113 59 Praha 3, Czech Republic
Telephone: (+420) 222-718-932
Fax: (+420) 222-720721
E-mail address: stech.milan@cmkos.cz

Mr Dušan Martinek
Head of Education Department
Telephone: (+420) 234-462-572
Fax: (+420) 222-718-994
E-mail address: martinek.dusan@cmkos.cz

Mr Pavel Janíčko
Advisor, Social Economy Department
Telephone: (+420) 234-462-594
Fax: (+420) 222-718-994
E-mail address: janicko.pavel@cmkos.cz

Mr Miroslav Kosina
Vice President of OS KOVO
Telephone: (+420) 234-462-892
Fax: (+420) 234-462-632
E-mail address: kosina.miroslav@cmkos.cz

Ms Marta Nováková
Member of the Committee for Equality
Address: ÚP OSOS, Malinovského nám. 4, 660 87 Brno, Czech Republic
Telephone: (+420) 542-139-415
Fax: (+420) 542-139-415

Mr Filip Matoušek
Advisor, Department of Education
Telephone: (+420) 234-462-238
Fax: (+420) 222-718-994
E-mail address: matousek.filip@cmkos.cz

ASO
Mr Zdeněk Židlický
Vice President
Address: Nám. W. Churchilla 2, 113 59 Praha 3, Czech Republic
Telephone: (+420) 234-462-813
Fax: (+420) 222-711-965

Association of Disabled Persons
Mr Josef Vanický
Head of Care Services Department
Address: Karlínské nám. 12, 186 09 Praha 8, Czech Republic
Telephone: (+420) 224-815-915
Fax: (+420) 224-816-835
E-mail address: stacionar.szdp@volny.cz

Czech Council for Children and Youth
Mr Pavel Trantina
Vice President
Address: Senovážné nám. 977/24, 116 47 Praha 1, Czech Republic
Telephone: (+420) 234-621-209
Fax: (+420) 234-621-549
E-mail address: crdm@adam.cz

ESTONIA

EAKL
Ms Annely Verbitskas
Member of the Bargaining Committee
Address: Parnu Mnt 41A, 10119 Tallinn Estonia
Telephone (+372) 641-2800
Fax: (+372) 641-2801
E-mail address: eakl@eakl.ee

HUNGARY

MOSZ
Ms Rita Benkő
Training Policy Advisor
Address: 1021 Budapest, Tárogató út 2-4, Hungary
Telephone: (+36 1) 275-1445, 275-1460, 275-1480
Fax: (+36 1) 394-2802
E-mail address: munkastanacsok@pronet.hu

MSZOSZ
Ms Mária Hercegh
Executive of the Women's Section
Address: 1086 Budapest, Magdolna utca 5-7
Telephone: (+36 1) 323-2655, 323-2656,
Fax: (+36 1) 323-2654
E-mail address: kgyorgy@mszosz.hu

LITHUANIA

LPSK
Ms Diana Cep-Ceplinskaja
Member of the Youth Centre
Address: J. Jasinskio 9 –213, 2600 Vilnius, Lithuania
Telephone: (+370 2) 49-69-21
Fax: (+370 2) 49-80-78
E-mail address: lpss@takas.lt

MACEDONIA

CCM
Ms Mirjana Hadži Skerleva
President, Trade Union of Workers in Trade of Macedonia
Address: Str 12 Udarna Brigada 2a, 91000 Skopje, Macedonia
Telephone: (+389 2) 161-374, 236-940, 114-274
Fax: (+389 2) 115-787
E-mail address: ssm@mt.net.mk

MOLDOVA

CSRM
Mr Dumitru Ivanov
President, Trade Union of Education and Science
Address: 129 Str. 31 August Street, 2012m. Chisinau, Moldova
Telephone: (+373 2) 237-418
Fax: (+373 2) 237-698
E-mail address: cfsind@cni.md

POLAND

OPZZ
Ms Renata Górna
Expert
Address: Kopernika 36-40, 00-924 Warszawa, Poland
Telephone: (+48 22) 826-4676
Fax: (+48 22) 826-7106
E-mail address: inter@opzz.org.pl

Solidarnosc
Ms Ewa Tomaszewska
Member of the Presidium
Address: ul. Waly Piastowskie 24, 80-855 Gdansk, Poland
Telephone: (+48 58) 308-4232
Fax: (+48 58) 308-4482, 308-4495
E-mail address: zagr@solidarnosc.org.pl

ROMANIA

Cartel Alfa
Ms Maria Niculescu
Expert
Address: Splaiul Independentei 202A, etaj 2 si 3, Sector 6 Bucharest, Romania
Telephone: (+40 21) 212-6638, 212-6631, 212-6632
Fax: (+40 21) 312-3481, 212-6631, 212-6632
E-mail address: alfa@cartel-alfa.ro

CNSRL Fratia
Ms Anita Cristea
Responsible for Women's Issues
Address: 1-3 Ministrerului st, Bucharest 1, 70109 Romania
Telephone: (+40 21) 312-4347
Fax: (+40 21) 312-5292
E-mail address: cnslr-fratia@fx.ro

SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Nezavisnost
Mr Darko Marinković
Head of the Education Sector
Address: Nusiceva 4/IV 11000 Belgrade, Yugoslavia
Telephone: (+381 11) 324-4542
Fax: (+381 11) 324-4118
E-mail address: nezavisn@Eunet.yu

CITUM
Ms Rosa Popović
President of the Women's Section
Address: 81000 Podgorica, Novaka Miloseva 29/1, Montenegro
Telephone: (+381 81) 230-547
Fax: (+381 81) 230-499
E-mail address: ssscg@cg.yu

SLOVAKIA

KOZ SR
Ms Katarina Hudecova
Expert in Employment Issues
Address: Odborarske nám c. 3, 81570 Bratislava, Slovakia
Telephone: (+421 2) 502-39-117
Fax: (+421 2) 555-61-956
E-mail address: internat.dep@kozsr.sk

UKRAINE

FTUU
Mr Valentyn Pozhydaev
First Deputy Chairman
Address: Maydan Nezalezhnosti, 2 252012 Kiev, Ukraine
Telephone: (+380 44) 228-1249, 229-8057
Fax: (+380 44) 228-1249, 229-8057

VOST
Mr Oleksandr Dzhulyk
President
Postal address: pob 176, vul Volodymyrska, 10, 01025 Kyiv 25, Ukraine
Telephone: (+380 44) 203-1003
Fax: (+380 44) 202-1146
E-mail address: vostlv@ukrpack.net

RESOURCE PERSONS

ILO Geneva
Mr Michael Sebastian
Acting Director, ACTRAV
Address: 4, route des Morillons,
CH-1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland
Telephone: (+41 22) 799-6328
Fax: (+41 22) 799-6570
E-mail address: actrav@ilo.org

Ms Barbara Murray
Manager, Equity Issues Group,
Skills Development Department
Telephone: (+41 22) 799-7512
Fax: (+41 22) 799-6310
E-mail address: murray@ilo.org

Mr Torkel Alfthan
Senior Training Policies Specialist
Training Policies and Programmes Group, Skills Development Department
Telephone: (+41 22) 799-7512
Fax: (41 22) 799-6310
E-mail address: alfthan@ilo.org

Ms Alena Nesporova
Senior Labour Economist, Employment Strategy Department
Telephone: (+41 22) 799-6434
Fax: (+41 22) 799-7678
Email address: nesporova@ilo.org

SRO-Budapest
Ms Dimitrina Dimitrova
Senior Specialist in Workers' Activities
Address: P.O. Box 936, Budapest 1386 Hungary
Telephone: (+36 1) 301-4900
Fax: (+36 1) 353-3683
E-mail address: dimitrova@ilo.org

Ms Eszter Szabó
Programme Assistant
Telephone: (+36 1) 301-4915
Fax: (+36 1) 353-3683
E-mail address: szabo@ilo.org

ICFTU Gender Network
Ms Agnieszka Ghinararu
Address: Ostasilor 5, Sector 1, Bucharest Romania
Tel/fax: (+40 21) 313-1503
E-mail address: ghinararu@xnet.ro

ICFTU Youth Network
Mr Péter Bányai
MSZOSZ
Address: 1086 Budapest, Magdolna utca 5-7
Telephone: (+36 1) 323-2655, 323-2656
Fax: (+36 1) 323-2654
E-mail address: kgyorgy@mszosz.hu

WCL
Ms Camelia-Marilena Dascalescu
Assistant
WCL Liaison Office, Bucharest
Address: Splaiul Indepdendentei, nr. 202, cam. 28
Bucharest, Sect. 6/Roumanie
Tel. (+40 21) 310-1586
Fax: (+40 21) 310-1586
E-mail address: cmtest@cartel-alfa.ro

ETUC
Mr Antonio Giacché
Advisor to ETUC
Address: 5, Boulevard Roi Albert II
B-1210 Brussels, Belgium
Tel: (+32 2) 224-0411
Fax: (+32 2) 224-0454, 224-0455
E-mail address: ETUC@ETUC.ORG

FGTB
Mr Eddy Van Lancker
Regional Secretary of ABVV West-Vlaanderen
Conservatoriumplein 9
8500 Kortrijk, Belgium
Fax: (+32 56) 268-259
E-mail address: eddy.vanlancker@abvv-wvl.be

University of Athens
Mr Yannis Yfantopoulos
Professor of Health Economics and Social Policy
School of Law, Economics and Political Science
Address: Sahtouri 12 Str., 152 32 Halandri Athens, Greece
Tel: (+30 10) 684-0212
E-mail address: yfa@otenet.gr