

**FOR
LABOUR
RIGHTS!**

**Trans-National Solidarity,
Common Goods and
Perspectives of Organising**



International Conference

**October 27-29, 2017
Belgrade, Serbia**





Conference identity:

SLOBODNA DOMENA

ZADRUGA ZA OTVORENI KOD I DIZAJN,
a not-for-profit workers' cooperative for open source in
software development and design.

www.slobodnadomena.hr

**FOR
LAB
RIG**



**OUR
RIGHTS!**

Introduction

With the aim of tackling problems situating labour rights in the broader context of social rights, the Belgrade office of the Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung is organising a conference on the topic of how to organise labour in times of deindustrialisation, the advanced de-organisation of the labour-movement and an ongoing fragmentation and precarisation of working conditions – not only in the region of the so-called «periphery economies» in Southeast Europe, but across the globe.

The conference focus is organised around three key topics:

- building transnational labour solidarity;
- organising and campaigning in the public sector;
- reaching un- and under-organised workers – mainly young workers who haven't yet had an opportunity to unionize/get unionized, but also other classes of workers with precarious employment arrangements.

The conference programme will open with a public event which aims to discuss the concept of «Global Social Rights» on a general level, and also present to the general public the basic concepts, facts and histories pertinent to this topic. Furthermore, it intends to tackle questions of organising and campaigning in the public sector. While closely following the given specific situations in each country, the public sector is under constant pressure to be privatised and to become more «competitive» – which means nothing other than to actively take part in the capitalist logic of profit-maximising. The everyday consequences of this for the largest sections of every society are numerous and disparate. One obvious negative trend is that the prices of certain common goods are rising – the energy industry is one very recent example of how private providers develop strategies to completely bypass the state and the common interest of every society in maintaining reasonable energy prices. In Serbia, for example, the citizens of Niš organised a large protest movement against the high electricity prices. Another example is the health system which is – similarly to the energy sector – constantly under strong pressure to privatise. The arguments of those pushing the privatisation agenda include: the inevitability of austerity measures, the

higher quality of medical care (this refers to: no waiting, the greater availability of diagnostic procedures, a broader range of available diagnostic procedures, more time dedicated to each patient by medical care providers, friendlier and more motivated staff), and a higher level of transparency. In practice this leads, in opposition to the advocates of privatisation, directly to a two-class medical care system in which a small number of wealthy people are able to enjoy medical benefits, while many in society are left unable to pay for any kind of quality medical care. In Croatia, for example, a long-standing dispute is running over the possible privatisation of the «Imunološki zavod» – a central state-owned medical institution which deals with the production of vaccines and other immunological products. On a more general level, the hegemonic neoliberal discourse constantly tries to antagonise the labour forces working in the public and private sector. One of the key arguments is the thesis that working people in the public sector are lazy and well paid, while those in the private sector are diligent, but underpaid. It is certainly true that workers in the private sector are overloaded with work and underpaid, but the socio-economic position of employees in the public sector is everything but secure. The logic behind this invention of an inherent social clash between private and public is, first, not oriented towards a strategy to increase wages and living conditions for those employed in the private sector, but to decrease standards for those employed in the public sector. Second, this ideological trick leads to a decline in solidarity and relocates the socio-economic struggles from the materialistic binary of «work» and «capital» to an inner-working class binary. The consequences are tangible, resulting in increasing difficulties with organising the working class through common socio-economic interests, with practicing solidarity and with developing counter-hegemonic approaches to the preservation of good public services on the one hand, and to overcoming the exploitation of workers in the private sector on the other hand.



27.10.2017

DOM SINDIKATA

TIME:
18:00 - 22:00

Introduction:

KRUNOSLAV STOJAKOVIĆ, BELGRADE OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

BORIS KANZLEITER, CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION,
BERLIN HEADQUARTER OF ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

Lecture by:

PROF. DR. CHRISTOF SCHERRER, KASSEL UNIVERSITY, Germany
»Global Social Rights as a Concept«

Comment:

ANANNYA BHATTACHARJEE, ASIA FLOOR WAGE CAMPAIGN, India

Discussion

Convivial Evening

Global Social Rights as a Concept

Lecture by:

PROF. DR. CHRISTOF SCHERRER

KASSEL UNIVERSITY, Germany

Comment:

ANANNYA BHATTACHARJEE

ASIA FLOOR WAGE CAMPAIGN, India

28.10.2017

HOTEL PALACE

TIME:
09:30 - 19:00

- 09.30** KEYNOTE
I. REACHING THE UN- AND UNDER- ORGANISED
FLORIAN WILDE, BERLIN OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG
- 10.30** KEYNOTE
II. ORGANISING AND CAMPAIGNING IN PUBLIC SECTOR
WIN WINDISCH, TRADE-UNIONIST, Germany
ANA VRAČAR, BASE FOR LABOUR INITIATIVES AND DEMOCRATISATION [BRID], Croatia
- 11.30** Coffee Break
- 12.00** KEYNOTE
III. ORGANISING TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR SOLIDARITY
PROF. DR. MANFRED WANNÖFFEL, BOCHUM RUHR UNIVERSITY, Germany
- 13.00** Lunch Break
- 14.30** WORKSHOPS [SESSION I]
- 16.30** Coffee Break
- 17.00** WORKSHOPS [SESSION II]
- 19.00** Dinner
-
- 20.00** **SIDE-PROGRAM**
»Foreign Direct Investments and Labour Rights in Southeast Europe«
STEFANIE HÜRTGEN / IVAN RADENKOVIĆ / TONI PRUG

I. REACHING THE UN- AND UNDER-ORGANIZED

Introduction:

LUKA MATIĆ, BELGRADE OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

Faced with a grave decrease in the rate of unionisation, as well as with a growing number of precariously employed workers, the labour movement and its social and political allies are constantly having to figure out new strategies and tactics of struggle for a living wage and decent working conditions. Through discussing this topic, we want to enable an exchange of labour organisers' experiences from around the globe, with the aim of empowering them in their ability to reach out to different un- and under-organised groups of workers. This also entails the problem of groups underrepresented in trade unions, such as women, migrant workers, precarious workers, and unemployed workers. The questions we wish to pose include: what kinds of organizing efforts can be made to reach these target groups and to sustainably organize them in unions? What are new progressive models of labour organising and how can they be multiplied in different contexts? Finally, we are also interested in how new models of labour organising might be reflected in union structures, and how these models relate to communities in which workers participate beyond their workplace.

KEYNOTE

FLORIAN WILDE, BERLIN OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

This keynote lecture will address two sets of questions. The first set concerns questions surrounding the constant decline in the rate of unionisation and its causes. For example, this part of the keynote lecture will address the direct suppression of labour organising and the aggravating circumstances under which labour organising occurs in a global neoliberal economy. The second set addresses questions of counter-strategies by the labour movement. Namely, in what sense do commu-

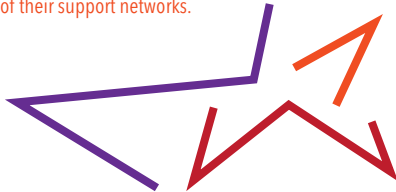
nity based models of labour organising transcend problems that traditional craft and industrial unionism has been facing for at least the last quarter of a century.

In addition, concrete cases in which community organisations have carried labour struggles forward will be discussed. More specifically, the focus will be on how the interaction of different types of actors in one communal coalition reshapes the community, and what the outcomes of those communal coalitions are at the level of policy.

WORKSHOPS:

I. ORGANISING NON-TRADITIONAL LABOURERS

The liberalisation of labour legislation on the one hand, and the development of post-industrial economic activity on the other, successfully dismantled traditional workplace labour organisations which were based on stable employment and industrial/craft workers' identities. This led to a historical low in the share of unionised workers. The goal of this workshop is therefore to convey experiences of organising different groups of workers: industrial workers employed through employment agencies and thus deprived of stable employment; the digital precariat that has been atomised through losing a common workspace and which has thus been deprived of a worker's identity substituted by a creative freelancer identity; and migrant workers who have been deprived of their support networks.



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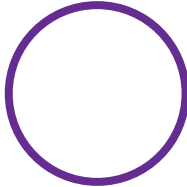
MILOŠ BAKOVIĆ-JADŽIĆ

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II.

WORKERS' STRUGGLES AND THEIR COMMUNITIES

Tracing the line of transfer of workers' struggles from the industrial workplace to a post-industrial de-unionised community, the goal of this workshop is to present different models of communal organising practices seeking to defend labour rights and improve working conditions. Bearing in mind the fact that community unions subsume different models of coalitions between labour organisations and civil society actors – both asymmetric and symmetric – questions such as the following emerge: what does the coalition-building process look like? What are the means of defining common goals? How is the stability and longevity of the coalition achieved? And finally, what strategies do coalitions implement to achieve their goals?



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Moderation:

LUKA MATIĆ

BELGRADE OFFICE,
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II. ORGANISING AND CAMPAIGNING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

Introduction:

KRUNOSLAV STOJAKOVIĆ, BELGRADE OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

The focus of this session is on organising and campaigning efforts in and around the public sector, with the health sector as a focal point. Following the outcome of the elections that took place in June 2017 in Britain, and the political success of the British Labour Party's election campaign which resulted in gains, it is obvious that the question of public goods is of immense political relevance – or, as Bashkar Sunkara stated in his comment »Why Corbyn won« in Jacobin-magazine: »Labour's surge confirms what the Left has long argued: people like an honest defence of public goods.« In this framework there are two main issues that this workshop intends to address: the issue of social movement unionism and how to organise successful campaigns on the one hand, and the issue of connecting working people from the public and private sector on the other.

KEYNOTES

WIN WINDISCH, TRADE-UNIONIST, Germany

ANA VRAČAR, BASE FOR LABOUR INITIATIVES AND DEMOCRATISATION [BRID], Croatia

The main aim of this session is to give a qualitative overview of key experiences in the field of cooperation between civil-society organisations and trade-unions, relating to both how to organise effective and recognisable campaigns, and how to articulate common demands. To achieve this we will present two campaigns, one from the healthcare sector in Germany, and one on defending public healthcare in Croatia.

WORKSHOPS:

I. SOCIAL MOVEMENT, UNIONISM AND CAMPAIGNING

This workshop focuses on modes of cooperation between civil-society actors dealing with questions relating to workers' rights and workers' organising/educating, as well as with more traditional trade-unions and their strategies of organising and acting. Key questions include establishing sustainable cooperation on common activities such as educational formats and campaigns, questions which are inherently connected to the issue of supporting labour rights in general. To achieve this, a common ideological framework needs to be created – both inside concrete campaigns as well as on the more political level of how societies should be organised. This is especially important if we want to tackle the core of the contradiction between capital and labour. There is a widely shared supposition that the majority of classic trade unions are generally more interested in defending existing working places and labour rights, while left oriented civil society organisations are mostly more interested in asking questions relating to the roots of exploitation, or questions more closely connected to socio-economic processes in the region of Southeast Europe, such as examining the consequences of the privatisation process from the 1990s onwards. Topics which this workshop will tackle include efforts to connect civil-society actors with trade-unions/trade-unionists, and the question of how to offer potential formats for common education and cooperation. The key workshop questions will be: what kind of knowledge and support do trade-unions and trade-unionists (e.g. shop-stewards) really need? How can common campaigns between civil-society organisations and trade-unions be organised in concrete struggles?

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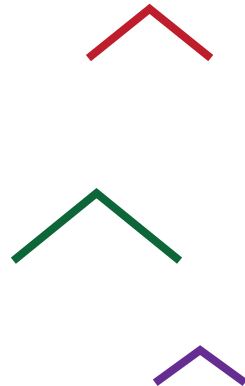
MIJAT STANIĆ

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Moderation:

ANA VESELINOVIĆ

BELGRADE OFFICE,
ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG



II.

HEALTH CONCERNS ALL OF US - QUESTIONS OF ORGANISING AND CAMPAIGNING IN HEALTH SECTOR

This workshop is about strategies of avoiding the ongoing process of healthcare privatisation. While there are several public services necessary for every society to function, the healthcare system is surely one of those services upon which every single member of every society depends, regardless of his or her position in the socioeconomic hierarchy. One important example of how workers can organise in the health system together with broader civil society actors around demands for better health care and better working conditions can be observed in Germany. The negative consequences of privatising health-care are numerous, and they range from rising financial costs which patients have to pay for services in private ambulances, to a gradual loss of workers' rights, and to a decline in the service quality patients come to receive in the residual publicly financed hospitals. Topics this workshop will tackle include the privatization process inside the healthcare system and its consequences for working conditions and the quality of services, as well as possible strategies for connecting workers in the private and public sector in their struggles for both better working conditions and good public services. Key questions this workshop will explore include examining the common interests of wider society and workers employed in the public financed healthcare system, and the question of how to organise common actions and demands.

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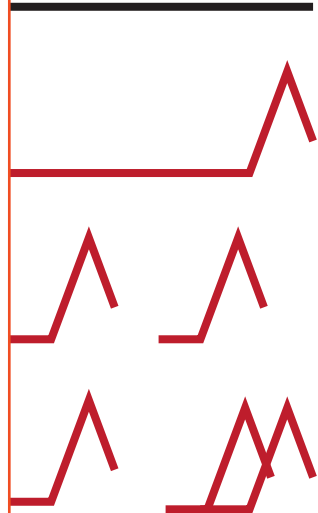
MEIKE SAERBECK

ASKLEPIOS HOSPITAL ST. GEORG in
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Moderation:

KRUNOSLAV STOJAKOVIĆ

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III.

ORGANIZING INTERNATIONAL LABOUR SOLIDARITY

Introduction:

BORIS KANZLEITER, CENTRE FOR INTERNATIONAL DIALOGUE AND COOPERATION,
BERLIN HEADQUARTER OF RLS

Internationalism and international solidarity and organising have played an important role in the workers' movement from its beginnings. However, the labour movement has been faced with many defeats since the 1970s. Social rights, and among them, labour rights as guaranteed and enforceable rights have increasingly come under fire and have been replaced, when at all, with voluntary commitments made by corporations and labels.

Economic globalization and the rise of neoliberalism are among the major causes of these developments, and they can only be tackled on a global scale because their roots, causes and potential solutions have long transcended the framework of the nation-state. Hence, looking back at the internationalist beginnings of the labour movement and working towards rebuilding transnational labour solidarity is an urgent task for unions, activists and left actors alike. This includes cross-border organising within multinational companies, but also along global production chains.

However, transnational organising is no compensation for, but in fact depends on effective labour organising at the company and national level. Therefore, this part of the conference will focus on the possibilities and limitations of existing transnational models of labour organizing. We will look at different experiences and we will discuss questions of strategy and tactics as well as conditions for the success of international organizing efforts.

KEYNOTE

PROF. DR. MANFRED WANNÖFFEL, BOCHUM RUHR UNIVERSITY, Germany

The history of international labour activism traverses at least several decades and includes, among others, the formation of international unions and works councils, transnational campaigns, the activities of labour NGOs, and legal/judicial actions. What can we learn from these experiences? What can be concluded as regards the conditions of success as well as the limitations or problems relating to specific models of transnational labour organizing?

Beyond the question of organizing, how can unions and activists address the gap between internationally enshrined labour rights, such as the ILO core labour standards, and their limited degree of implementation? Are there possibilities in the field of international law that can enforce transnational corporations' responsibility for the working conditions and wages in their production networks?

WORKSHOPS:

I. UNION COOPERATION ACROSS BORDERS AND ALONG PRODUCTION CHAINS

This workshop will focus on modes of organizing, cooperating and campaigning that can be developed between unions working across borders. We will look at different experiences of collaboration between trade unions and discuss how labour struggles in one place can benefit from international solidarity. The workshop will also discuss the questions of how to deal with differences as regards to organizational capacities, influence, wages, and working conditions etc. What are the strategic and tactical advantages to cooperating across borders and what models, such as organizing along production/value chains, are useful? How, specifically, can unions and activists in Southeast Europe learn from the experiences of other actors and become part of transnational struggles?

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STEFANIE KRON

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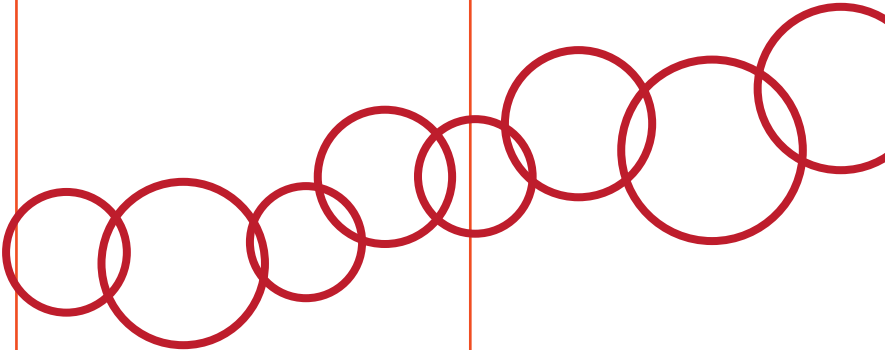
KLAUS PRIEGNITZ

IG METALL, Germany

Moderation:

PHILIP DEGENHARDT

BERLIN OFFICE,
ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG



II. FIGHTING FOR LABOUR RIGHTS IN A GLOBALIZED ECONOMY

This workshop will focus on campaigns as well as other forms of transnational collaboration in the field of labour rights that aim to connect unionists with allies beyond the workplace. For example, this includes international struggles for a living wage or campaigns regarding the responsibilities of and working conditions within global corporations. How can we connect different arenas and actors – such as legal, political and union actors – in order to influence policies, company decisions and working conditions? What are the possible strategic & tactical points of intervention for campaigns, as well as the organizing effects of those campaigns?

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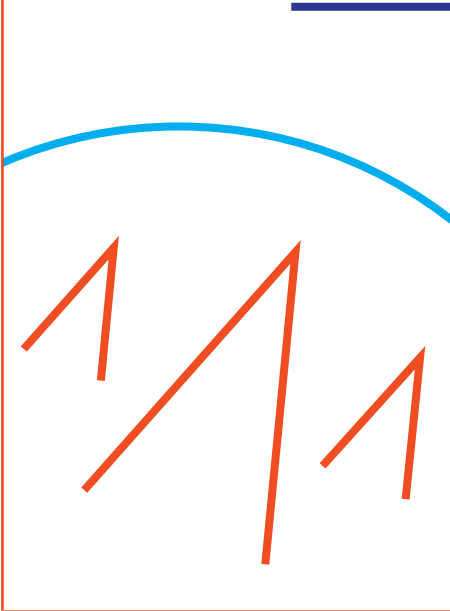
BOJANA TAMINDŽIJA

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Moderation:

MILOŠ BAKOVIĆ-JADŽIĆ

CENTRE FOR POLITICS OF EMANCIPATION,
Serbia



SIDE-PROGRAM

28.10.2017
20:00 - 22:00

Dom sindikata

Foreign Direct Investments and Labour Rights in Southeast Europe

Speakers:

STEFANIE HÜRTGEN

SALZBURG UNIVERSITY, Austria

IVAN RADENKOVIĆ

Novi Sad, Serbia

TONI PRUG

Zagreb, Croatia

Moderation:

SAŠA DRAGOJLO

Belgrade, Serbia

29.10.2017

HOTEL PALACE

TIME:
09:00 - 14:00

TIMELINE

- 9.00** **PANEL I:**
ORGANISING TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR SOLIDARITY
- 10.30** **PANEL II:**
ORGANISING AND CAMPAIGNING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR
- 12.00** Coffee Break
- 12.15** **PANEL III:**
REACHING THE UN- AND UNDER- ORGANISED
- 13.45** Lunch Break

PANEL I:
REACHING THE UN- AND UNDER-ORGANISED

Panellists:

SINIŠA MILIČIĆ, REGIONAL INDUSTRIAL TRADE-UNION (RIS), Croatia
FLORIAN WILDE, BERLIN OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG, Germany
GORAN LUKIĆ, DELAVSKA SAVETOVALNICA, Slovenia
SAM NELSON, JOBS WITH JUSTICE, USA

Moderation:

LUKA MATIĆ, BELGRADE OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

PANEL II:
ORGANISING AND CAMPAIGNING IN PUBLIC SECTOR

Panellists:

ANDRAŽ MALI, CEDRA, Slovenia
MARINA IVANDIĆ, BRID, Croatia
WIN WINDISCH, VERDI, Germany

Moderation:

KRUNOSLAV STOJAKOVIĆ, BELGRADE OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

PANEL III:
ORGANISING TRANSNATIONAL LABOUR SOLIDARITY

Panellists:

PETER SCHERRER, ETUC, Germany
ANANNYA BHATTACHARJEE, ASIA FLOOR WAGE CAMPAIGN, India
TOMISLAV KIŠ, NOVI SINDIKAT, Croatia
MARTIN SCHIRDEWAN, BRUSSELS OFFICE, ROSA LUXEMBURG STIFTUNG (tbc)

Moderation:

WENKE CHRISTOPH, BERLIN OFFICE, ROSA-LUXEMBURG-STIFTUNG

N O T E S

Date:



Date:





