



# Building resilient and crisis-proof trade unions for public services

16-18.02.2023  
Dublin (Ireland)

## EUROFEDOP SEMINAR



**EUROFEDOP**  
Montoyerstraat 39, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
[secretariat@eurofedop.org](mailto:secretariat@eurofedop.org)    [www.eurofedop.org](http://www.eurofedop.org)

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**Building resilient and crisis proof  
trade unions for public services**



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### *Report*

*Moderator: - Femke Beumer, Center Stage (The Netherlands)*

The seminar took place in the Hyatt Centric the Liberties, a historic spot in the centre of Dublin. Eurofedop member organisations POA and PDFORRA kindly co-organised this seminar and welcomed all delegates.



**PDFORRA**  
PERMANENT DEFENCE FORCES REPRESENTATIVE ASSOCIATION  
Cumann Ionadaíochta Chéimnigh Eile na mBuan-Óglaigh

**Thursday, 16.02.2023**

The programme started with an official welcome by the President of Eurofedop, Norbert Schnedl, followed by opening remarks of Karl Dalton, General Secretary, POA and Mark Keane, President PDFORRA. In their opening remarks they shared reflections on resilience with examples of the rich history of Ireland.



Norbert Schnedl



Karl Dalton



Mark Keane

In the evening, all delegates visited the impressive Dáil Éireann for a tour through the houses of parliament. Delegates were warmly welcomed by Senator Michael McDowell.



Resilience was the central theme running through the seminar, focusing specifically on the question of how to be(come) a resilient and future proof trade union organisation. To this end, the programme consisted of speakers coming from different countries and backgrounds, but also from across different generations.

**Thursday, 17.02.2023**

**Martin Cuffe**, Head of Secretariat, Independent Review Group - Defence Forces (IRG-DF, Ireland)



Mr. Cuffe shared his views and experiences on the way we work, the significant transformation the world of work is currently undergoing and the role of trade unions. There will be many more disruptions, and regrettably there may be additional pandemics or crises, which will undoubtedly have a significant impact on our society, our economy, and the workforce. This requires prioritising, adapting, and building resilience to manage the changes that are now manifest, but it also requires that we must prepare for instability from external factors. Now is the time to define a new period of leadership from the trade union movement to achieve these outcomes for both members and society alike. The trade union movement is the credible source for ambition and reality, and it can be relied upon to concentrate on what may be referred to as "the art of the possible," which is ingrained in the shared vision that unions historically have exemplified.



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**Romana Deckenbacher**, National Council representative, and deputy Chair of GÖD/FCG (Austria)



Ms Deckenbacher discussed the challenges and opportunities of teleworking. She touched upon digitalisation in general, and the multitude of consequences COVID has had on the way we work.



Teleworking has been possible in Austria for 15 years. And particularly since the pandemic, workers, in agreement with their employer, work from home and remotely on a regular basis. Teleworking requires clarity and guidelines, regular contact and clear tasks. It is all part of the wider digital transformation. We are in the fourth wave of industrialisation; Industry 4.0. It is so important that Trade Unions listen to the people, and that we stress that digital tools can also help in easing the load, there are also opportunities. Trust, continuous training and education are key. We should always work together with others in politics and society, we need to be co-shapers and work on shared objectives. Maintaining social cohesion is an important task for Trade Unions and indeed politicians.



**Jorge Cabrita**, expert, EUROFOUND



Mr. Cabrita introduced participants to the mission and the work of the European foundation for the improvement of living and working conditions (Eurofound). He presented recent data and research on how COVID impacted employment, working conditions and employment relations. Relationships between job quality and health have become even more obvious during the pandemic. Research also focused on healthcare workers, representing the sector with the “biggest number of people in a strained situation”. Eurofound reports conclude that improvement of job quality should remain a key concern, as job quality support quality working lives and productivity. Supporting high involvement work organisation and employee representation are key to this end.



**Visit to Eurofound**

The President of Eurofedop and a select delegation of participants also visited the offices of Eurofound based in Dublin. Eurofound's Working Life Unit presented research and data on the rise of teleworking. Eurofound also showcased



its EU PolicyWatch database which provides information on policy measures related to various crisis contexts. Eurofedop and Eurofound leadership made useful connections, and a follow up on comparative research on social dialogue and the representativeness studies will certainly take place.

**Silvana Roebstorf**, DG EMPL (DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion)  
European Commission



In order to deliver on the European Pillar of Social Rights, Commission President Ursula von der Leyen announced in her political guidelines the so-called Action Plan. The Action Plan was published in March 2021 and sets out different initiatives of the Commission to make the rights and principles contained in the Pillar a reality for people. It focuses on

three priority areas: more and better jobs, skills and equality, social protection and inclusion. Ms. Roebstorf provided delegated with an update on where different EU initiatives stand today.

Reaching the EU level targets is a joint effort. Member States set-up their own national targets to ensure the EU-level ambitions can be met by 2030. (See the national targets [here](#)). According to current predictions, the EU-level employment and poverty reduction targets will be reached and even exceeded. The EU-level skills target will almost be reached.



The presentation was followed by a good discussion with delegates on EU and national competences in the area of healthcare, among others.

**Liz Gillis**, historian on radio and TV (Ireland)



Irish colleagues organised an inspiring session on Irish history with Liz Gillis. Ms Gillis is from the Liberties in Dublin, and a historian on radio and TV and author of six books about the Irish Revolution including the " Fall of Dublin ", "Women of the Irish Revolution".

In addition to this, there was also a presentation/workshop on Irish labour trade union movement in the early 1900s with representatives of the linen industry.





**Saturday, 18.02.2023**

**Panel “How European policies and legislation play out across sectors and member states”**



Véronique Dhalluin, CFTC Federation of Territorial Public Service FFPT/CFTC (France)

Gerard Guinan, General Secretary, PDFORRA (Ireland)

Tamara Golis, Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (USSCG, (Montenegro)

The panellists provided an overview of how EU policies, legislation and initiatives play out in their countries, across different sectors. They covered topics such as pensions and social security, contracts, working time, and wages. It is clear that the situation differs per country and sector, and naturally, in the case of Montenegro whether you are an EU member state or not. However, solutions and opportunities were discussed and trade union representation at European level remains important.

The panel session was followed by a lively interaction with the audience. Delegates shared personal testimonials recalling the moment they knew they wanted to work in the public service.

A manifesto was drafted and there was one suggestion from delegates for an amendment in the final sentence. It refers to teleworking as a 'risk' but this is not the case all the time and everywhere. The proposed amendment was accepted.



In the manifesto, EUROFEDOP members urge that people, the public servants of Europe, remain at the centre of all policies and legislative proposals regarding work and public administrations.

Crisis or no crisis, the right conditions need to be in place to conduct decent trade union work and safeguard healthy labour relations.



The President of Eurofedop, Norbert Schnedl, handed over the manifesto to the panel members representing the “next generation”. A symbolic yet relevant action, in line with the theme of the seminar.



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With this manifesto, we reiterate the main principles we stand for.



## MANIFESTO

signed by members of the European Federation of Public Service Employees (EUROFEDOP)

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EUROFEDOP members urge that people, the public servants of Europe, remain at the centre of all policies and legislative proposals regarding work and public administrations.

EUROFEDOP members therefore call for: A vital tripartite Social Dialogue with collective bargaining between social partners including at sectoral level. To enable and secure this, the right conditions need to be in place to conduct decent trade union work and safeguard healthy labour relations, including face to face meetings with all parties involved.

EUROFEDOP members specifically focus on mitigating and restoring the negative impact of COVID and other crises on the health and well-being of workers.

Dublin, 18 February 2023



European Federation of Employees in Public Services  
Fédération Européenne du Personnel des Services Publics  
Europäische Föderation der Öffentlich Bediensteten  
Europese Federatie van het Overheidspersoneel  
Federación Europea del Personal de los Servicios Públicos

Montoyerstraat 39 bus 20, 1000 Brussels, Belgium  
secretariat@eurofedop.org  
Tel. + 32 (0)2 230 38 65  
www.eurofedop.org

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