



Trade unions and social dialogue in Estonia

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Unions

Union density rate - approx. 15%

Confederations:

- EAKL - Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions
 - re-established in April 1990 (first TUC in 1919)
- TALO - Estonian Employees' Unions' Confederation
 - split from the EAKL in 1993-1994



EAKL – Confederation of Estonian Trade Unions

45,1 thousand members

18 affiliates in:

- industry, transport and private services
- health care
- state and local authorities

The logo graphic consists of a vertical black line intersected by a horizontal black line. To the left of the intersection, there are overlapping colored squares: a yellow one at the top, a red one in the middle, and a blue one at the bottom. The text 'EAKL' is positioned to the right of the vertical line, in a blue, sans-serif font.

EAKL

- Secretariat (11 employees)
- 6 regional offices

Central office:

- President
- Organisational secretary
- Legal secretary
- Wage secretary
- International secretary
- PR-manager



Social dialogue

- 1992 April – first tripartite agreement
- 1992-2003 – 17 tripartite agreements
 - Minimum wage
 - State unemployment allowance
 - Basic income tax exemption
 - Participatory democracy
 - Guarantee fund
 - Principles of new Labour Contract Act



Bipartite negotiations

- Unions – employers
 - National: confederations
 - Branch: sectoral federations/associations
 - Company: union and employer
- Unions – government
 - Civil servants' salaries
 - Teachers' salaries



EAKL–Employers' Confederation

- December 1999 - memorandum
- February 2001 – unemployment insurance
- March 2001 – social partnership
- August 2001 – principles of increasing minimum wage for 2002-2008
- September 2003 – principles of new Labour Contract Act
- Agreements on minimum wage (2002, 2003, 2004)



Collective agreements

- Total coverage – 26%
- 1 national agreement
- 2 sectoral/branch agreements
 - public transport
 - health care
- Energy, railway, mining covered by company agreements



Social partnership structures

Decision making

- Tripartite and bipartite negotiations
- National ILO Council
- Supervisory bodies of public institutions
 - Health Insurance Fund
 - Unemployment Insurance Fund
- Individual Labour Dispute Settlement Commissions



Social partnership structures (2)

Consultative institutions

- Economic and Social Council (1999)
- Working Environment Council (2000)
 - National
 - Factory/enterprise (50+ employees)
- Employment Councils
 - National
 - Regional



Achievements

- Participatory Democracy Agreement (1996)
- Guarantee Fund (1998)
- Trade Union Act (2000)
- Extension of national and branch level collective agreements
- Social Insurance Reform (2000-2002)



Labour conflicts

- Autumn 2002 – EAKL broke off the dialogue with the government
- December 3, 2003 – teachers and employees of cultural institutions went on 8-hour strike
 - 2 solidarity strikes
- September 23, 2004 – engine drivers went on 6-days strike



Priorities for unions

- Organising and recruiting members
- Increasing representativity
- Increasing bargaining capacity
- Increasing the ability to take industrial actions
 - 2004 – EAKL and affiliates organised 16 strikes, demonstartions, picketing etc.



Challenges

- Reluctance of the state/government to engage in social dialogue
 - no real interest in social partners' involvement
 - refusal to allocate ESF money for social partners' capacity building



Challenges (2)

- Forcing the government/state:
 - to abolish the total ban on strikes of civil servants
 - to inform and consult unions
- Increasing the employers' interest in collective bargaining
 - strong will to lower standards