



Dear readers,

After a bit more than one year of producing UATUC INFO newsletter, we are pleased to present you a refurbished UATUC INFO. New UATUC Info layout is one of the results of the joint work with our Norwegian LO/LOFF friends and colleagues, whom we cordially thank for their help and support in the process, hoping to continue this fruitful cooperation. Your comments and interest in reading this newsletter are a strong impetus which obliges us to keep improving our communication efforts.

Unfortunately, though a brighter design, this issue does not bring brighter news about the overall situation in Croatia.

While most European Governments are discussing exit strategies, Croatian Government has presented probably its first concrete antirecession measures. However, it is still to be seen how effective they will prove to be.

The unemployment rate in Croatia reached 17.7% with the total of almost 310.000 unemployed. The UATUC foresees that unemployment will continue to increase and reach around 415.000 jobless at the end of the year.

The UATUC demands the establishment of the new economic and social model, new sensibility for common good, fair distribution of the public goods, strong rule of law and social justice.

Croatian President Ivo Josipović announced the establishment of the Social Justice Council as well as the appointment of a commissioner for labour and workers' rights, reiterating thus his commitment to the protection of workers' rights, social dialogue and decent work.

This issue also brings you an interview with Mirko Štorga, president of the Construction Trade Union, highlighting some of the key problems in a sector which only recently was one of the pillars of the Croatian economy and development.

Meeting with the head of the EU Delegation to Croatia, World Day for Social Justice, shipyards' privatization and many more issues are dealt with in this edition of the UATUC INFO ■

Dijana Šobota

Head of International Department

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FIGURE OF THE MONTH

17.7%

UNEMPLOYMENT RATE

FIRST CONCRETE ANTI-RECESSION MEASURES – RESULTS STILL TO BE SEEN

While most European Governments are discussing exit strategies, Croatian Government has presented probably its first concrete antirecession measures. However, it is still to be seen how effective they will prove to be



Zagreb, 1 March 2010 – On 5 February Croatian Parliament finally passed legislation on establishing a fund for economic recovery and development from which the state will, with 275 million euro, provide guarantees for companies facing difficulties due to the crisis. The measure is in fact a joint project of the Government, private banks and the Croatian National Bank, which has simultaneously released 413 million euro by lowering the level of compulsory reserve for banks operating in Croatia, thus enabling the solvency needed for the project.

The guaranties will be awarded by the Croatian Bank for Reconstruction and Development (HBOR) at auctions which will be held twice a month. The guaranties will be granted to banks who offer the lowest interest rates for credits to be given to companies, while HBOR, after the auction, will need to approve banks' proposals for funding of concrete companies.

Loans are intended to companies which started facing difficulties after July 2008, favouring investments in production and related services. Maximum amount of loan will be around 11 million euro, and HBOR warranty will cover up to 50 percent of the amount, thus motivating banks to choose the most sustainable projects, while still ensuring relatively favourable interest rates.

Another Government measure aimed at boosting economy in the times of recession was presented on 26 February. The Government is planning to invest around 140 million euro in co-founding of capital venture funds. Similarly to the HBOR loan warranties, the state funds should be matched by equal amount of the private capital. However, it is still not clear if

proposed model will really be able to stimulate development of capital venture funds, so far not existent in Croatia, or where from will the money promised by Government come from.

The third measure presented since the beginning of the year consists of the state loans for buying apartments. For apartments cheaper than 1600 euro per square meter, citizens will be able to borrow between 100 and 300 euro from the state, for a maximum duration of 30 years and with a favourable interest rate of 5 percent. While Government is hoping that this measure will save jobs in construction sector by increasing sales of newly built apartments, critics are claiming it will only help to sustain already overpriced real estate market.

While it is still to be seen how effective all presented measures will prove to be, the UATUC Vice-president for the economy sector **Ivan Tomac** has called for an urgent tripartite meeting to discuss the measures for assisting concrete endangered companies. Industrial unions affiliated to UATUC are asking that the list of companies which are facing serious difficulties as the result of the crisis is defined and that clear criteria are set to distinguish between companies which can survive with the state assistance and the ones which do not have conditions for survival at all. It should also be defined which form of help in restructuring or liquidation process they can expect ■

State guaranties will be granted on auctions to the banks who offer the lowest interest rates for credits to be given to companies, while HBOR will still have to approve the list of concrete companies to be funded

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UATUC WITH THE EU DELEGATION TO CROATIA

“Lack of climate for social dialogue is not good for any country. It is disappointing that the trade unions are not regarded seriously”, said Mr. Vandoren



Zagreb, 25 February 2010 – Following the invitation from the Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Croatia, the UATUC representatives met with the Head of the Delegation Mr. **Paul Vandoren**, Second Secretary and Deputy Head of Section for Social Cohesion, Regional Development and Infrastructure **Richard Máša** and **Rima Joujou Deljić**, Task Manager for Social Policy and Employment. UATUC delegation was represented by its President **Ana Knežević**, **Ana Miličević Pezelj**, Head of Organization, Education and Publishing Department, **Marina Kasunić Peris**, Head of Industrial Democracy Department, **Dijana Šobota**, Head of International Department and **Darko Šeperić**, Coordinator for European Integration.

When Ana Knežević together with the expert team thoroughly informed the Ambassador Paul Vandoren on the current situation on the Croatian trade union scene, trade union views on situation in the country, actions and activities proposed by the UATUC, alone or in cooperation with other trade union confederations, with special attention to social dialogue state of affairs, Mr. Vandoren said “he was well briefed before the meeting, however he did not expect such a gloom picture of social dialogue and trade union situation“. He said that the lack of climate for social dialogue is not good for any country and that it is disappointing that the trade unions are not regarded seriously.



- Corruption and judiciary are high on the priority list of the Delegation and the conclusion of negotiations will demand additional huge efforts in that field. In the contrary, the accession negotiations could prolong excessively. Mr. Vandoren highlighted the problem with the implementation of numerous newly adopted laws. “EU does not demand the shipyards' privatization, but only the cancellation of state subsidies“. He also emphasized the need to inform the citizens on the consequences of accession to the EU and expressed the willingness of the Delegation to cooperate with the Government and trade unions in that respect. A next meeting with the UATUC is proposed for June ■

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JOSIPOVIĆ: WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE INTEGRAL PART OF PROGRESS

Workers' rights and rights of all employees, as well as the social dialogue, are integral part of progress. Decent wages for decent work and decent pensions for older generations' contribution to our society are integral parts of the justice to which I am committed, said Croatian President Ivo Josipović



Zagreb, 25 February 2010 – After a meeting with the leaders of trade union confederations, Mr. **Ivo Josipović**, President of the Republic of Croatia, announced the establishment of a council for social justice and the appointment of a commissioner for labour and workers' rights. He is open for the trade union confederations' proposals for the composition of that council, which will include also the representatives from a wider range. This Council should be a complement to the already established Economic Council, which was welcomed by a series of criticisms for being „a parallel Government“ and not including labour movement representatives.

“I want to gather the strongest employers in the Economic Councils, the ones who are a leverage of the ownership and capital on the Croatian market, and on the other side there will be a Council for Social Justice. In this way, both sides are very well represented, and I will represent the result of the synergy of the work of those two bodies“, said Josipović.



“Trade union rights are not a direct competence of the President of the State, however I promised to open new paths and forms of communication in the Croatian society”, added Josipović

UATUC President and the current coordinator of the trade union confederations **Ana Knežević** warned about the lacking and insufficient social dialogue, which is now needed more than ever, having in mind the economic crisis turning into a social one. This is supported by the fact that 75.000 workers work without salary. She reminded the President of the demands sent by the trade union confederations as early as in October 2009, demanding a new economic model, which implies a set of reforms – pension, healthcare, tax, new

territorial structure, etc.

“We expect to discuss these proposals with the President and that in the future he will be a public advocator of the things we agree with him”, concluded Knežević.

Ivo Josipović reiterated that “there is no advanced economy if all participants in the process of work are not motivated. That is why workers' rights and rights of all employees, as well as the social dialogue, are integral part of progress. Decent wages for decent work and decent pensions for older generations' contribution to our society are integral parts of the justice to which I am committed” ■

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WORLD DAY OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

In the “social state of Croatia” average salary covers only 67.3 percent of the minimal existential costs for four member family. 310 thousand people, or 17.7 percent of the workforce, are unemployed while further 73 thousand is working but not receiving salary



Zagreb, 20 February 2010 – UATUC marked the World Day of Social Justice by drawing attention to the real picture of the “social state of Croatia”, where two thirds of employed workers receive wages that are below average wage and where the average wage does not cover the minimum cost of living for a four member family.

- The number of unemployed has in only one year increased from 250 to almost 310 thousand and there are no realistic chances for improvement in the future. Such a high number of the unemployed is the result of expiry of fixed-term contracts but also of the reduction of business of their employers. If this trend continues, the unemployment could grow up to 415 thousand by the end of the year, warned **Ivan Tomac**, UATUC Vice-president for economy sector.

For the first time since April 2006 the number of unemployed has reached more than 300 thousand. The majority of the unemployed persons with previous work experience (90 percent of total number) come from the sector of wholesale and retail trade, processing industry, construction sector and services. 55.6 percent of unemployed are women, whose share has increased for 10 percent since January 2009.

Furthermore, information of Croatian Financial Agency (FINA) shows that around 73 thousand workers work in enterprises whose accounts are currently blocked, which consequently means that they do not receive their salaries.

According to purchasing power Croatia is at the 27th place in Europe, with 4.800 euro per capita. Only Poland, Latvia, Romania, Bulgaria and Moldova are behind Croatia, said **Ana Knežević**, UATUC President, while presenting the “trade union basket” for January three weeks earlier. UATUC has been monitoring the “basket”, which calculates minimal existential costs for a four member family, since 1994.



According to indicators from January, the average net wage of 740 euro covers only 67.3 percent of the cost of living. Two retired persons with the average pensions of 300 euro can cover only 59.4 percent of their cost of living.

The introduction of the crisis tax and the increase of the VAT rate in August 2009 only worsened the situation and caused further job losses. Crisis tax fills the state budget with about 27.5 million euro per month, but it also means that an average family must give up more than 25 kg of bread or 3 kg of fresh meat every month. Further consequence is a decrease of around 20 million euro in paid income tax since last summer.

“We need a government which can manage the country and not the people. We need a government which appreciates labour as much as it appreciates capital and which will promote the development of social values.”

- If some thought had been given in advance and if trade union proposal had been taken into account, this amount could have been invested in saving jobs, because a job once closed no longer contributes to the budget. Crisis tax and the increase in VAT rate resulted in significantly lower total consumption. At the same time, they have put heavier burden of the crisis on the workers with average and below average salaries – pointed out Ana Knežević.

Taking into account described social situation in Croatia, UATUC demands establishment of the new economic and social model, new sensibility for common good, fair distribution of the public goods, strong rule of law and social justice.

- For that we need a government which can manage the country and not the people. Our Government showed that it is not able to manage the crisis and find a solution which leads to economic and social recovery. We need a government which appreciates labour as much as it appreciates capital and which will promote the development of social values – said **Jagoda Milidrag Šmid**, UATUC Representative for the City of Zagreb on the press conference UATUC organised to mark the World Day of Social Justice ■

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SECOND ROUND OF SHIPYARD'S PRIVATISATION

The bidders will need to take over the obligation to keep in force the existing collective agreements, make an estimate of the necessary number and structure of employees upon restructuring and a plan to provide for surplus labour



Zagreb, 15 February 2010 - After the first tender for privatisation of state-owned shipyards failed, with only two received bids declined for not meeting the mandatory tender conditions, Croatian Privatisation Fund (HFP) has published second round of invitations for bids for privatisation, with the deadline of 19 April.

In the second attempt of privatisation the state is selling, under special conditions, at a price of one kuna, its majority stakes ranging from 83 to 99 percent in four shipyards – “3. Maj”, “Brodotrogir”, “Brodogradilište Kraljevica” and “Brodograđevna industrija Split”. The state is also selling 100 percent stake in “Brodosplit – Brodogradilište specijalnih objekata” for a nominal price of its stock capital of 18.16 million kuna, and a majority stake of 59 percent in the “Uljanik”, for which the starting price has been set at 397.5 million kuna.

The tender terms oblige potential buyers to submit a programme of restructuring, including structural and financial measures needed to establish shipyards' long term profitability. The bidder's own contribution for restructuring must amount to at least 40 percent of the restructuring costs.

Croatian shipbuilding industry makes up 12 percent of country's export and 1.4 percent of the GDP. Its share in the world market is 0.22 percent.

Potential buyers will also have to submit a plan for the payment to banks of the shipyards' financial obligations for which the government has provided guarantees, and to take over the obligation of increasing their stock capital in cash with their own funds.

The bidders will also have to make an offer as to the amount of the licence to use the maritime domain, take over the obligation to keep in force the existing collective agreements, make an estimate of the necessary number and structure of employees upon restructuring and a plan to provide for surplus labour, specify how shipyards will ensure the completion of jobs from the existing order book, and offer acceptable instruments ensuring that they will meet the obligations they have assumed.

Apart from the mandatory terms, the bidders will be able to offer the signing of agreements with the social partners, as well as the possibility of making available, within six months from the day of the initial recapitalisation (after the stock capital is increased), 25 percent of shares, to be offered for sale to workers under special conditions (with an initial discount of five percent and an additional discount of one percent per year of service). That possibility is envisaged in tenders for five of the six shipyards. The exception is Uljanik, a successful shipyard which will be offered for privatisation under slightly different conditions.

The Croatian Chamber of Commerce has reported that the shipbuilding industry makes up 12 per cent of Croatia's export and 1.4 per cent of Gross Domestic Product as well as that this industry has a multiplicative factor of 2.6. Currently 34 ships are in the shipyards' order books, accounting for 0.22 per cent of the world market ■

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TRADE UNIONIST AS A STATE SECRETARY FOR LABOUR

Krešimir Rožman, former Vice-president and legal adviser in the Matica trade union confederation, as well as the editor of the labour legislation magazine *Radno pravo*, is a new state secretary for labour, replacing the former secretary Mrs. **Vera Babić**, expert in labour legislation.

"Rožman is an excellent lawyer, communicator and team player", says Vera Babić and added "more efforts will be needed in the field of social policy". Mrs. Babić left the position of the state secretary dissatisfied with the progress of pension reform process and linking the labour market with education. She refused to disclose more information on an offer to continue her career in the similar field working for an international institution ■



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RENEWED COOPERATION WITH CGIL



Zagreb, 17 February 2010 – The UATUC was visited by representatives of the largest Italian trade union confederation CGIL, **Roberto Treu**, Coordinator of the International Department, **Gian Franco Benzi**, responsible for the Balkans Region in the International Department and **Antonio Morandi**, from CGIL European Secretariat. They met the UATUC President **Ana Knežević** and the expert staff and in the second part of the meeting also with the presidents of trade unions affiliated to the UATUC.

The purpose of the visit was to promote the cooperation between these two largest trade union confederations from the neighbouring countries – Italy and Croatia – also at the national level. Namely, since 1995 there is already intensive cooperation in the form of Interregional Trade Union Council, a joint body of the three Italian trade union confederations for the border regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto and on Croatian side Primorsko-goranska County and Istarska County. Apart from this, CGIL and UATUC opened in 2002 in Rijeka INCA office which has consultative task mostly for Croatian workers who worked, work or wish to work in Italy. Trade union guests from Italy have informed their hosts in the UATUC about their project approved by the European Commission related to cross-border cooperation of Italian region Veneto Giulia, Slovenia and Croatian regions of Istria and Primorje, through EURES office ■

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CHALLENGE OF INFORMAL ECONOMY IN EUROPE

Budapest, 12 February 2010 – "The Challenge of informal economy in Europe" Conference within ITUC/PERC-FNV project was held in Budapest on 10 and 11 February. The conference was organized by PERC, FES and Hungarian trade unions. There were participants from 16 countries and participants from Croatia were **Domagoj Ferdebar**, Economic Policy Adviser (UATUC), **Goran Bakula**, Economy Adviser (NHS) and **Milica Jovanović**, Legal Adviser (NHS). The conference consisted of several thematic workshops. Before the workshops, representatives from Ukraine, Serbia and Domagoj Ferdebar from Croatia presented the success and failure of trade unions in dealing with informal economy during the project. Workshops discussed government's policies to reduce informal economy, social dialogue and trade union strategies for meeting the challenge of informal economy, approach to workers and organizing workers, changes in trade union strategies and structures, interest and services for special groups of workers (domestic workers, self-employed, migrants, etc.). The conference marked the end of the three-year project dealing with grey economy. Domagoj Ferdebar from the UATUC and Goran Bakula and Milica Jovanović from NHS participated in the project from its beginning ■



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JAP AND JIM CONFERENCE - GLOBAL CRISIS AND ITS INFLUENCE ON CROATIA

Zagreb, 11 February 2010 – The Croatian Ministry of Economy, Labour and Entrepreneurship and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare in cooperation with DG Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities organized a conference entitled "Global crisis and its influence on Croatia".

The purpose of the Conference held in Zagreb was to ensure the continuation of exchanging ideas related to the future implementation of Joint Memorandum on Social Inclusion (JIM) and the Joint Memorandum on Employment Policy Priorities (JAP) activities. The emphasis of this year's Conference was on the discussion of the impacts of the economic crisis. Also, the progress made in the past implementation period was discussed, and the identified issues and plans for the year 2010.

Participants of the JIM part of the Conference discussed among others the deinstitutionalization, extension of social services network and social planning. In the part related to JAP the discussion was held on the influence of crisis on labour market in Croatia. The advertised jobs, activities in which there is decline and activities in which there is increase of demand, newly-registered unemployed and other activities undertaken by the Croatian Employment Service in times of economic changes were analyzed. Social partners presented their position regarding the influence of economic crisis and proposed the ways to overcome negative consequences of the crisis. The Head of Organisation, Education and Publishing Department **Ana Milićević Pezelj** talked about the possibilities of employment in new sectors ■

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EDUCATION STRATEGY

Zagreb, 15 February 2010 – Within the preparatory phase of ILO/ITUC-PERC project entitled "Technical support with establishing educational strategy", external ILO/ITUC education experts **Agnieszka Ghinararu** and **Hubert Cambier** visited the UATUC. The purpose of the project is to provide technical assistance to the UATUC in evaluating educational policy and practice and in developing a comprehensive strategy which could support the internal reforms of the organisation. Educational experts met the UATUC President **Ana Knežević**, UATUC Vice-Presidents for Economy Sector **Ivan Tomac**, UATUC experts and presidents of trade unions affiliated to the UATUC ■



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PRO GE TRADE UNION VISITED SMH AND EKN

Zagreb, 2 February 2010 – Representatives of Austrian trade union PRO GE (Produktionsgewerkschaft) visited Metalworkers' Trade Union of Croatia (SMH) and Autonomous Trade Union of Workers in Power Industry, Chemistry and Non-metal Industry of Croatia (EKN). President of PRO GE **Rainer Wimmer**, Federal Secretary **Peter Schissler**, representative of the International Department **Martina Schneller-Bouchnak** and President of PRO GE's works council **Toni Steinmetz** were received by **Vedran Dragičević**, SMH Acting President, **Ivan Tomac**, EKN President and also President of the Confederation of Metal and Chemical Trade Unions of Croatia (KSMK), **Ivo Marjanović**, KSMK Vice-President and their colleagues.

Topics of the joint meeting were: the process of merger between

Austrian trade unions (programme of activities, territorial organisation, status of professionally employed staff in trade unions which merge, membership fee, transitional period), education and training system, possible cooperation (activities of social partners regarding the implementation of the system, the role of state, state's regulations, role of employers and role of trade unions). The possibility that SMH and EKN participate in certain PRO GE projects was also discussed. However, on 25 February, the Main Committee of the EKN Trade Union adopted the proposal submitted by its Executive Committee, which said the year 2010 is not a good year for merger, considering the state of affairs of the Croatian economy, the number of members, loss of members and the problems within the UATUC. Nevertheless they expressed their firm commitment to continuation of discussions with SMH and similar unions ■

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PRE-ACCESSION ECONOMIC PROGRAMME 2010-2012

Zagreb, 21 January 2010 – Croatian Government has adopted Pre-accession Economic Programme (PEP) for the period 2010-2012. Being one of the most important documents which EU candidate countries regularly need to adopt, PEP elaborates in detail the direction of economic and structural policy in the forthcoming medium-term period.

In a joint letter sent to Finance Minister **Ivan Šuker**, all five Croatian trade union confederations expressed their dissatisfaction with the way the document was prepared, and especially concerning involvement of unions and employers' organisations. With such short notices and the role of trade union experts reduced to mere

observers, it would be better if trade unions were not invited to participate at all, says the letter.

Trade union comments on the programme itself include a number of objections especially in the field of labour market policies, as well as regarding the macroeconomic projections used as a foundation of the document, public finances, pension system, judiciary reform and environment protection.

Pointing to the fact that the programme was not guided by EC 2009 Progress Report for Croatia, trade unions ask what is the point of adopting a document which is not based on realistic indicators and without a clear responsibility for its implementation ■

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“SALARY DECREASES AND LAY OFFS ARE EVERYDAY LIFE OF THE CONSTRUCTION SECTOR”

High public investments in infrastructure and boom in the real-estate market made construction industry one of the pillars of the Croatian economic growth during the last decade. Today, construction industry is one of the sectors of Croatian economy which is most severely hit by the crisis, facing solvency problems, lack of new investments, non-payment of salaries and social contributions and lay offs.

Construction industry and industry of construction materials in Croatia together employ around 115.000 workers. Estimations done by the Trade Union of Construction Industry of Croatia (SGH – Sindikat graditeljstva Hrvatske) say that more than a half of those workers work in companies which are experiencing problems, around 13.000 workers already lost their jobs and almost 25.000 workers receive salary lower than the one stipulated by the branch collective agreement.

How is SGH responding to the situation in the construction sector?

We are currently completely occupied by endless negotiations on company level, mostly dealing with preserving jobs and finding solutions for payment of salaries. However, in many situations we are almost helpless, because the whole sector is experiencing serious lack of work and other problems. Public investments in infrastructure have been stopped. Situation is most severe in the companies that were building highways and tunnels during the last five or six years. Government is cancelling already signed contracts and those companies now, all of a sudden, simply do not have any work to do.

Situation is also severe in the building construction companies. There is a large number of unsold apartments on the market, so new ones are not being built. Consequently, the industry of construction and building material is suffering too.



How are the employers reacting to this situation, especially with regard to obeying the collective agreements?

We are trying to keep the process of lowering salaries, which is inevitable in some companies, under control. However, employers often unilaterally change the level of salaries. Of course, this will lead to the increased number of lawsuits filed by the trade union.

Regarding the branch collective agreement, this is the first time in 18 years that the employers were the one who called for new negotiations, asking for 7% decrease in salaries. SGH managed to refuse the call for negotiations and collective agreement signed in 2007 and amended in 2008 is still in force. However, negotiations will follow soon, because it has to be adjusted with the new Labour Code. We need to prepare, because employers will probably use it to renew pressure on lowering salary levels.

As a member of the Executive Committee of the European Federation of Building and Wood Workers, how do you assess international cooperation in your sector?

The most important results of our cooperation on international level are international framework agreements with multinational companies. Of course, those agreements do not stipulate levels of salaries, but they set obligation to negotiate with trade unions in all countries where it does business. There are many multinational companies which are active in Croatia, including the construction sector, so this kind of agreements means a lot to us. In my opinion, EFBWW works and functions perfectly ■

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LABOUR CODE

New Croatian Labour Code, harmonised with the EU legislation, has entered into force on 1 January 2010. Publication brings full text of the new law, together with a guide on implementation of new provisions written by Marina Kasunić Peris, Head of UATUC Department for Industrial Democracy ■



EU OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY POLICY

Trade union guide to occupational health and safety policies of the European Union is aimed at workers' representatives involved in health and safety issues on national and European level. Guide brings an overview of the EU institutions and procedures in the field of OHS, as well as the trade union role in this field ■



LAW ON OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY

New Croatian Law on Occupational Health and Safety, harmonised with the EU legislation ■

If you are interested in any of these publications, please contact international-uatuc@sssh.hr, or order through www.sssh.hr

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Union of
Autonomous
Trade Unions
of Croatia

Together we are stronger

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