



Conference “Dialogue of social partners and government: myths and reality”

Officials expect a greater unity by social partners

More pragmatic suggestions and less emotion – those are the expectations described by representatives of state institutions when characterizing development of dialogue between government and social partners. Meanwhile the Union and employers representatives indicated the insufficient involvement of social partners in decision making process, by severely limiting their capability to represent their positions when working with new legislation initiatives.

On May 23 union, employer and government representatives met in the “Dialogue between social partners and the government: myths and reality” conference organized by Free Trade Union Confederation of Latvia (LBAS), which was devoted to assessment of the current operation of National tripartite cooperation council. During the event all three sides gathered at a table to discuss the future of tripartite dialogue in Latvia.

Vice chairman of LBAS, Egīls Baldzēns indicates: *“It is very important that social partners can join the decision making at the very beginning of the process, because that provides the opportunity to come with suggestions and influence the outcome. Currently we often find ourselves in a situation when an important decision has already been discussed and practically accepted at the level of ministries, and we as social partners can only give our assessment, which essentially does not affect anything”.*

During the conference LBAS gave a presentation on a research about NTCC operation assessment, which was developed in cooperation with *Innovation Norway* Decent work and tripartite dialogue fund. Research shows that social partners and state institutions evaluate the current NTCC operations differently. For example 77% of public representatives and only 25% of private sector representatives consider the intensity and quality of government consultations with social partners as sufficient.

“The most important aspect is that all three sides have a desire to cooperate. What we expect from social partners in order to improve the quality of cooperation is more pragmatic and less emotional suggestions. It’s also important that social partners come directly to the responsible ministry with a unified position in the issue at hand. There have been several situations when a ministry has to assume the role of mediator in an opinion exchange between the employers and employees, consuming too much time,” stated representative of Work relation and job safety policy department, Māris Badovskis.

The event was also attended by the Special advisor on Economics and social affairs of Norwegian trade union confederation *LO-Norway*, Jan Erik Støstad, who shared in the experience of implementing social dialog in Norway. He indicated that the strengthening of social dialogue in Norway is implemented on all levels, starting from a certain enterprise and ending with tripartite cooperation on a national level, therefore providing a quality representation during the process of decision making for social partners.

