

Progetto europeo "Rafforzare la cultura della negoziazione nei sistemi scolastici europei"

Study visit to Warsaw

- 1) In the meeting on the first day, at ZNP's national headquarters, the top officials of the Polish trade union spoke about: the characteristics of ZNP, the Polish school system and collective bargaining in education.**

Characteristics of ZNP: founded in 1905, it is part of the OPZZ Confederation and has about 300,000 members - teachers, administrative clerks and maintenance and cleaning workers – out of a total of 570,000 in the school system. Members include also retired workers.

ZNP is structured along the following geographical levels: **national, district, municipalities and schools**, where a local branch can be opened with 7 members. Its governance bodies are the **Governing Council, the Presidium, and the Secretariat**. It is organized also by sector.

ZNP intends to foster equal opportunities, free quality education designed to develop talents, skills and interests, social recognition for the teaching profession. Moreover, it carries out recreational and assistance activities for its members and is active in various cooperation activities at the national and international level. It also organizes teacher training programmes.

Powers within the school system:

The State is responsible for most of the curriculum, national bargaining and stipulates such important acts as the "Teachers' charter", which defines teachers' status, salary, and career. It assigns a bonus to households as a contribution toward the cost of attending social private schools.

The Region, which has been delegated certain functions by the State, exercises a control function over the activities of local self-government entities and has direct responsibility over certain types of schools and teachers' training.

The Municipalities supervise primary and middle (gymnasium) schools; they have been responsible for local bargaining in Poland for some years now but the school population is declining. Such situation affects the resources made available by the state to the municipalities for schools.

Structure of the school system: school is compulsory for 10 years (from 6 to 16)

From 0 to 7 years: pre-school years, the last of which is mandatory

From 7 to 13: primary school

From 13 to 16: first level of secondary school

After 16 years: general secondary school (up to 19 years), specialized secondary school (up to 19 years), secondary technical (up to 20 years), first-level (up to 18 years) and second-level (21/22 years) vocational school.

At the end of this cycle, a student can enrol in the University, Academies and higher specialization schools.

Bargaining: the process has a national and a local level (region, district and especially with municipalities).

At central level bargaining covers raises in base salaries (last November 7% for school staff, the only state sector that obtained a raise) and raises related to promotions in a four-level career (teacher trainee, contract teacher, appointed teacher, chartered teacher) based on two factors: seniority and the passing of a competition.

At municipality level bargaining covers additional raises (for a total of 16) given to teachers for tutoring, coordination, and management support activities and, to small extent, as a recognition for the teacher's motivation.

2) **On the second day we visited Lublin, where we had meetings with the representatives of the Lublin ZNP District Board and the local administration.**

With the representatives of the Lublin ZNP District Board themes were explored on the bodies of the union and collective bargaining between the local trade union and local institutions.

Local collective bargaining: the Lublin ZNP District Board, which is structured in Council, Presidium, and Secretariat, manages trade-union relationships with:

the Municipalities of the District, which supervise pre-school institutes, primary schools and the gymnasium (middle school) and are responsible for bargaining on supplementary pay

the District, which is responsible for the schools of excellence in primary schools and the gymnasium, permanent education centres, sports and art schools, children's care and adoption centres and the institutes for students with serious learning disabilities

With the Region, which is responsible for teachers' training, for pedagogic libraries, for special regional schools and for staff supplementary pay.

As with the national level, also at the local level relationships between ZNP and the institutions of the region, district and municipalities are regulated by specific acts (Teachers' Charter). Supplementary pay, which is to be attributed on the basis of well-defined **assignments and specific activities** (there are 16 of them) are negotiated at **regional and municipal** level. The Teachers' Charter defines a minimum pay for every teacher which cannot be violated. If a municipality pays less it is sanctioned and is required to make up for the shortfall.

Union relations with the region determine also the stipulation of acts on training, where funds are set for courses and to compensate participating teachers (in the last act, 1% of the total budget allocated to training).

In the district of Lublin cooperation activities with the Administration are well developed and the union is always consulted on topics concerning not only school and youth policies but also cultural and social aspects.

Noteworthy is the **traditional award** that ZNP gives to the municipality of the district that distinguished itself for the interest and quality investments in schools.

- 3) **In the subsequent meeting with the administration of the Municipality of Lublin topics related to the district and municipal school system and union relations were further explored.**

Territorial school system and union relations: the Lublin area is experiencing a **marked decrease in school population**. A consequence of this phenomenon is the proportional decline in funds to pay for activities and training and even the decrease in the number of teachers. Meanwhile, small public schools are closing, to the benefit of private schools, which do not have to meet minimum standards on the number of students.

In the Lublin area there are schools of every type and level and, in the overall evaluation of the final results for the various types of school, Lublin's schools rank very high.

The municipality features **four training and tutoring centres**, with 50 employees.

Teachers are **recruited at the school level** by the principal, based on the number of students. The teacher stays on probation for one year; at the end of the probation period, the teacher is evaluated by a committee chaired by the principal.

The school's principal is hired through a **competition launched by the municipality** and, before the job offer is made, the union's opinion is sought.

- 4) **Lastly, before the meeting of the steering committee, a meeting was held with the chairman of ZNP.**

The picture that the chairman outlined is a cause of deep concern.

Poland is experiencing a strong **decline in the student population**, which causes a substantial reduction in the allocation of economic and professional resources to the school.

In addition, the economic crisis prompted municipalities to cut school investments to channel the relevant resources to projects co-financed by the European Union, which will provide funding only with the participation of Municipalities equal to 25%.

On a positive note, basic pay for school employees rose by 7% whereas all the other public employees did not receive any salary raise.