

## CONFERENCES AND REPORTS

### REPORT FROM AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE "20 YEARS OF EU MEMBERSHIP - LABOUR LAW AND SOCIAL SECURITY LAW IN CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE"

Faculty of Law, Charles University Prague, 6 and 7 June 2024

From June 6 to June 7, 2024, the Charles University, Faculty of Law, Prague hosted a distinguished international scientific conference *20 years of EU Membership – Labour Law and Social Security Law in Central and Eastern Europe*, organized as a joint project of three main co-organisers (University of Ljubljana, Károli Gáspár University of the Reformed Church in Hungary, Jagiellonian University in Kraków and Charles University in Prague). Not only legal scholars from the academic sphere, but also a wide range of practicing lawyers showed interest in the conference, including representatives of all organizing Law Faculties.

The outstanding nature of the conference lay not only in the exceptional quality of the invited speakers, but also in the chosen topic, which promised lively expert discussions. This academic event was dedicated to the commemoration and exploration of the 20-year anniversary of the accession of several Central and Eastern European (CEE) states, including Czechia, Hungary, Slovenia, and Poland, to the European Union in 2004. The accession has ushered in a new era of legal harmonization and cooperation, significantly impacting the social and labour law landscape within these nations. The integration into the EU framework has led to a convergence of legal norms, standards, and principles that aim to ensure consistent protection of fundamental social rights across member states.

EU law has played a pivotal role in driving the transformation of national social law systems. The legal instruments and principles introduced by the EU have served as catalysts for progressive reforms, enhancing the rights and protections of workers, marginalized communities, and vulnerable groups within the CEE region. However, it is important to acknowledge that while significant strides have been made, there remains a considerable amount of work to be done. Challenges such as ensuring effective implementation, addressing gaps in enforcement, and adapting to new dynamics in the global economy necessitate a continued commitment to further harmonizing and strengthening social and labour law across member states.

The conference was divided into seven thematic blocks, each of which ended with an interesting discussion among the conference participants. The conference was officially opened by Kristina Koldinská (Professor and member of the Dean's Board, Charles University in Prague), who was its main organizer. The conference debate itself was then opened by a very interesting introduction speech of Monika Landmannová, Head of the European Commission Representation in the Czech Republic. This contribution was followed by other very inspiring Keynote speeches presented by Zdeněk Kühn, Judge of the Constitutional Court of the Czech Republic, or Cristina Mihes, senior expert, former Head of Labour Law and Reform Unit, ILO Geneva.

After the introduction, a first thematic block regarding non-discrimination and equal treatment was held. The contributions presented particularly mentioned the future prospects of achieving equality within the social law framework in CEE states. In the following thematic block, the participants discussed the topic of social protection. Issues of the elderly rights to social protection

or employment of persons with disabilities were discussed in detail. In the next part of this block, the complex topics of cross-border healthcare, or free movement rights were explored. The last presentations of the first conference day handled the work-life balance in EU law, in the CEE countries, as well as in England or the changing role of the employer in the light of work-life balance EU law.

The second day of the conference started with a block related to labour law topics, such as posting of employees, enforcement of the implementation of EU labour law, challenges of implementation of EU labour law in CEE-countries, with specific regard to its enforcement. The topic of evolving landscape of collective rights protection in the face of multinational corporations' influence on labour practices was a part. The last of the conference blocks focused on the topic of wage transparency and minimum wages, while the current issue of new EU legislation was opened, primarily the EU Directive on Adequate Minimum Wages a Directive on wage transparency and equal principles of remuneration for male and female employees.

Hereby this conference provided an exceptional platform to reflect on the transformative influence of EU law on national social law systems. The conference created a broad space for debate and there is no doubt that it did not remain without significant benefits for the scientific community. It emphasized the important achievements and challenges faced by CEE states in their quest to harmonize social and labour law while retaining their unique socio-cultural identities.

Its benefit lies mainly in the fact that it brought together legal scholars, practitioners, policy-makers, and researchers from across the world and provided its participants with insightful and critical analyses of the developments, challenges, and accomplishments in social and labour law within the context of the CEE region over the past two decades. The conference served as a platform for interdisciplinary exchange, fostering new perspectives and innovative solutions in the field. It is important to acknowledge that a monograph will arise from the conference and selected papers will be published in this journal.

Kateřina Štěpánková\*

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\* JUDr. Kateřina Štěpánková, Ph.D. The author is an assistant professor at the Department of Labor Law and Social Security Law, Faculty of Law, Charles University in Prague, Prague, Czech Republic. ORCID: 0000-0001-5642-9445.