

Reviews

Monika Čambáliková: Social Partnership: Institution, Strategy, Vision

University in Sládkovičovo, Sládkovičovo 2008, 92 pages.

Although slim, monograph *Social Partnership: Institution, strategy, vision* is a book rich in content. It was written by Monika Čambáliková, an independent fellow at the Institute for Sociology of SAS in Bratislava and a university teacher at the Faculty of Public Politics and Public Administration of the Visegrad University in Sládkovičovo. Besides, author is investigator of international and Slovak scientific and research projects (including projects related to the monograph) and an author of several scientific and professional works and is member of expert groups mainly in industrial relations, social sector, labour market, social partnership, social dialogue and civic society.

Work analyses social partnership as an institution and simultaneously a strategy, that enables social partners (association of employees and employers) to participate in decision making and control from the level of an enterprise across the whole society. At the same time, it presents social partnership as an institute and specific strategy to solve relations between employers and employees including prevention and regulation of their mutual

conflicts. It briefly points out to the selected theoretical and historical roots of social partnership and emphasizes the integrity and connections between social partnership, social citizenship and social state. Additionally, it brings closer look to the status and development of social partnership and collective negotiations in the context of economic globalization, integration, industrial and post-industrial era and the implications of these processes particularly in the area of social work. Furthermore, it brings attention to the restrictions and limits as well as new challenges and possibilities that the traditional social partners have to face considering also the development and possible modifications when applying the idea and the practice of “traditional” social partnership under new conditions. In general, mostly collective negotiations are the main tool to put into practice the idea of social partnership in the area of social work and the relations between employers and employees. The content of collective negotiations responds to the contemporary social and economic situation of the particular country. Regularly, it contains at least the issue of employment, wage policy, social policy of the enterprise, labour market conditions, launching of new technologies, length and management of working hours and working conditions.

Author points out to how mainly in democratic social states the idea and practice of participation in decision making and management and control of power in terms of social partnership is implemented and carried out. Influenced by the democratization process of the society, multilateral social dialogue is getting stronger and penetrates into all areas of social life from microstructures up to the macro-level of social system. However, she also draws attention to how today traditional social partners (particularly the unions) on all levels and spheres of decision making and participation are fighting to keep their social functions and real influence. Nevertheless, social partnership and social dialogue still remain a key element and important feature of European social model. Based on the analysis of the researched issue in the Slovakia (not only) author believes that in connection with the development of social participation in the Slovakia (not only) it is in future necessary to take into account the growing pressure of the involved partners to continually strengthen their positions and also the fact that other subjects will want to get included into the structures, institutions and networks. An efficient and democratic social dialogue (partnership) must be open to all relevant participants and must include their specific powers. If the traditional social partners want to retain their powers and influence, they will have to exceed their traditional activities and enter relevant multinational, European mostly as well as national and regional structures as active partners. Seventh chapter is devoted to social partners, social partnership and social dialogue in the European Union. Here, author observes that it is social dialogue that forms an integral part of decision-

making processes within the European Union. Through the dialogue, new European regulations are preserved and particularly in the employment area. At the same time, social partnership and social dialogue is an important tool for the creation of a European social dimension.

Nevertheless, with openness and criticality the book talks about problems and threats to efficient social partnership; generally it mainly concerns social state crisis, structural changes in the field of social (paid) work and economic globalization. In Slovak milieu it also relates to specific features and problems regarding how its players and structures are established and how they work.

EU member states including Slovakia are expected not only to enact “European” legislation in their countries and to accept “European” aims and standards in relevant areas, but also to implement and adjust “European challenges” to specific conditions and needs of individual countries in a creative manner. Respective European and national documents stress the role of social partners and the importance of collective negotiations. Collective negotiations and collective agreements serve employees and employers as a tool for taking part in the creation of their working and living conditions and both employees and employers can take their specific needs, interests and priorities into consideration. However, if we do not want any of the obligations, aims and measures to stay merely on paper, social partners and particularly enterprises and economic sector must as the author emphasizes ensure that collective and other agreements contain not only implementation tools, but also tools for monitoring, control and evaluation of the entrenched principles, measures and obligations. It is important that social partners' activities are directed towards sustainable quality jobs and decent work. Not even fixed-term contract or part-time workers should be excluded from the process of collective negotiations and collective agreements. Author thinks that the protection of decent work and remuneration that makes the worker's and his/her family's decent life possible still remains a topical task and challenge not only for social partners in Slovakia. Still, it is not always easy to achieve under current conditions.

In conclusion, the authors emphasizes that ensuring dignity of citizens and their basic rights is a key attribute of democracy. Equal chances mean free development of skills and the use of equal rights and chances without any permanent restrictions that might hinder to take part in economic, political and civil life.

Reviewed monograph analyses social partnership in close relation to social citizenship and social participation. It is put into the theoretical concepts of (social) state as well as European Union and European social model and presented in conceptual frame of various theories (corporativism, neocorporativism, Christian Social Teaching). Historical development was

briefly mentioned as well as development in the context of current globalization and integration processes. Thus not only university students, but also professional and general public will benefit from the publication.

Alena Paulíčková