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Report on the International Seminar Concerning *The Relation between Social Democratic Parties and Trade Unions*

In the period 4-6 April 2003, PSD, ISD and the Olof Palme Center have organized the seminar on the issue of *The Relations between Social Democratic Parties and Trade Unions* in Bucharest.

The seminary was attended by representatives of PSD, of the BNS (10 persons) and CNSLR-Frăția trade unions. The Swedish delegation was made up of four persons representing the Olof Palme Center – **Susanna LIF**, the Swedish Social Democratic Party (SAP) – **Bernt JANSSON**, the Swedish Trade Unions Confederation (LO) – **Jonas WALL** and the Swedish Social Democratic Youth Association – **Camilla FRICK**.

The Romanian counterpart was represented by Marian Sârbu, the Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity, Ion Giurăscu, Răzvan Ciriță, Ion Ciotloș, State Secretaries in the same Ministry, Elena Dumitru, State Secretary, Victor Boștinăru, chief of the International Relations Department, Marius Petcu, president of the CNSLR-Frăția and other trade union leaders.

The discussions were unfolded in Romanian and English.

The reunion aimed at achieving an information and opinions exchange regarding the organization, functioning and objectives of the trade unions, the trade union and social democratic youth from the two countries, as well as the features of the collaboration between social democratic parties and trade union sharing the same political doctrine.

The debates were divided into four main issues:

- History, organization, functioning and up-to-date objectives of the trade union movement;
- The specificity of the collaboration relation between social democratic parties and trade unions of the same political orientation;
- The social democratic youth organizations: structure, objectives, social and political actions;
- The reaction of trade union confederations to the challenges of EU integration.

Within the working tables, the representatives of each political or trade union organization presented short briefings regarding their respective

institutions. The Swedish guests talked about functioning mechanisms and strategies the party, the trade unions or the youth organizations are following in order to bring about adequate reactions to the economic and social challenges.

In order to be able to compare the Swedish and the Romanian experiences, the participants were addressed test-questions.

Thus, each issue was followed by the formation of some working teams made up of Romanian participants that formulated a series of collective answers to the questions addressed by the members of the Swedish delegation. The purpose of such target-questions was to familiarize the Swedish colleagues with the specific and the problems range of the Romanian trade union movement.

Also, an analysis regarding the specific of the collaboration between PSD and trade unions was made. The trade union leaders expressed their wish for the cooperation relations between the party and the trade unions to surpass the stage of the electoral campaigns and to be institutionalized at the national and local level.

The seminar was unfolded in good conditions. It is worth mentioning that the participants showed a special interest in debating more general issues, regarding social policies or the perspectives of European integration. More precise subjects stimulated to a lesser extent the interactive character of the seminar, and the audience acknowledged the fact that such training-subjects were already approached during the last years.

As a matter of fact, the opinions of some participants, at the end of the Seminar, underlined the very usefulness of such meetings, but especially between local representatives and leaders of the trade unions, the party and the youth organization. It was proved that the main interest of national leaders is the undertaking of broader social and political horizon subjects.

In the end of the Seminar's works it was decided to continue such meetings at local and regional level, and the Olof Palme Center agreed to participate in the organization of another two seminars.

The participants demanded that such debates avoid as much as possible the almost full concentration of the weekend, for an improved efficiency. At the same time, the lack of the PSD parliamentarians responsible with the social and economic affairs, who were invited to this seminar, was noticed.

Scheduling the Seminar in the weekend and some redundant subjects made that the presence of the guests in Romania was not always convincing. Nevertheless, on the whole, the seminar was a success, and the continuation of the cooperation with the Swedish partners by organizing regional level training programs is useful.