

East Africa Successful workshop on membership strategies

Substantial representativeness is key for employers' organisations (EOs). It determines their influencing capacity towards their governments and hence their ability to act as an effective and influential voice of business. It also determines largely their capacity for resources and action. And unfortunately representativeness is a serious challenge for many EOs in Africa. Much still must be done to improve both the retention of members – and especially the continuation of payment of membership subscriptions- and the recruitment of new members. The theme of the 3 day workshop was hence spot on and considered as highly relevant by all participating director generals and some of their staff (in total 22 participants) of the 9 African DECP partner countries (Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Kenya, Ghana, Tanzania, Nigeria, Malawi and Zambia) which were invited to this activity.

The workshop provided for strong reflection, exchange between participants and action planning on the key elements composing the membership cycle: awareness, recruitment, engagement, recovery, renewal, and reinstatement. The workshop was based on the delivery of inputs from DECP, the ILO, the ILO Training Centre in Turin as well as on the exchange of experiences between peers (participating countries and the director general from the employers' organisation of Sri Lanka). The focus was both on strategies as on very practical techniques to increase membership levels: good database management of members, clarity in value proposition, correct segmentation, adequate use of marketing techniques and communication, and correct monitoring of progress via KPI's were all themes which were prominent to guide the EOs in their membership efforts.

At the end of the workshop, the participants presented their action plans. These will now be further refined and be part of the planning for follow-up at national level where DECP support will contribute to concrete action and results.

The very positive evaluation also reinforced the idea to offer a similar workshop to DECP partner EOs in Asia and later Latin America, and to produce together with the ILO specialists a short handbook on the theme of membership strategies and some practical tools which will advance the implementation of effective membership actions.