

ILO DETERMINED TO PROMOTE COOPERATIVES

On 2 July, the International Labour Organisation – ILO – celebrated together with the international cooperative movement the 83rd



International Day of Cooperatives of the International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) and the 11th International Day of Cooperatives of the UN. According to ILO, access of the poorest sections of the population to financial services is a key factor to open up economic prospects and to enjoy social protection. In the 19th century, the cooperative movement started supplying financial services to people in difficulty both in urban and in rural areas. To this end savings, credit and insurance cooperatives were created. Throughout the world they met with immediate success. ILO points out that it is important to keep promoting such cooperatives, particularly the financial ones. In this respect its Director General, Mr Juan Somavia, stresses the link between cooperatives, financial services and their role in poverty reduction. Like ILO, WCL is convinced that decent work is essential to pull out of poverty. Financial cooperatives are one of the most important means to achieve the goal of decent work for all. It goes without saying that WCL supports ILO in promoting cooperatives. **For further details:** www.ilo.org

NEGOTIATIONS ON TELEWORK IN FRANCE

Telework, the fact of working at another place than the company's office, is on the rise. The *Confédération française des travailleurs chrétiens* – CFTC, our member organisation in France –

insists on a specific, adjusted and protected legal framework for telework. In France 7% of the workers are teleworking (2% at home, 5% at variable offices). Most teleworkers are male executives. Mr Jean-Pierre Koechlin, negotiator for CFTC, explains that telework is on the rise thanks to the massive use of the Internet and because "some employers clearly consider it an opportunity to raise the productivity by exerting strong pressure on the teleworkers". This framework does not

constitute a new kind of employment contract, because a teleworker is a full-fledged worker. Yet, it would be good that this way of working is formalised. The employment contract must settle things such as the work pressure, the voluntary nature, the adjustment time, reversibility, the same rights as the other employees, the maintenance of contact with the colleagues and with the institutions representing the staff... The negotiations should lead to a nationwide multi-sector agreement and translated into a law afterwards. The balance between occupational and private life must be preserved. Though the employers are not enthusiastic about such a framework, CFTC is optimistic about the outcome of the negotiations. The trade union want to give priority to quality jobs. WCL supports its member organisation in this. **For further details:** www.cftc.fr



CMTU MALTA PARTICIPATES IN GLOBAL WHITE BAND DAY

The 1st of July was Global White Band Day in the context of the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP). On that day, everybody who supported the action wore a white band. The main goals of GCAP are: struggle against extreme poverty by cancelling the debt among other things, fair trade agreements, improvement of aid for sustainable development and

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achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. CMTU, our member organisation in Malta, decorated its building with a large white banner, released a statement to the Maltese local press and placed an ad in the newspaper.

STILL WIDE WAGE GAP BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN IN BELGIUM

In the context of the World Economic Forum – WEF – research work has been done into the wage disparity between men and women. The analysis of this research in *Syndicaliste* n° 626 dd 25 June 2005, the fortnightly review of the French-speaking branch of our Belgian member organisation ACV-CSC, shows that Belgium is anything but exemplary in this respect. There is still a wide wage gap between Belgian men and women. In any case it is wider than in the Scandinavian countries, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and Costa Rica. In many cases the collective agreements and wage scales do not reflect the real situation. One thing is very obvious: women usually earn less than their male colleagues. According to ACV-CSC, there are several reasons for this. First, women more often interrupt their career or opt for a career they can combine with domestic and family tasks. On top of this, there are typically 'female' sectors, which enjoy much less prestige. Women have lower jobs with less advancement opportunities. Executive jobs are reserved for men, particularly in big companies. Not only women fall prey to wage discrimination. Workers of foreign origin undergo the same fate. Most astonishing is that, according to the WEF, countries that do not invest in equal opportunities endanger their position on the market. In the previous number of *Teleflash* (n° 204) we mentioned the *wage indicator* to compare wages. Belgium, too, has a wage indicator: www.salaire.be For further details: www.weforum.org, www.csc-en-ligne.be, *Syndicaliste* n° 626, 25 June 2005.

EVV CRITICAL OF THE LIBERALISATION OF THE SERVICES SECTOR

GATS – the General Agreement on Trade in Services – was signed in 1994 and pursues the worldwide liberalisation of general services such as water, education, health, tourism, energy and transport. The World Trade Organisation (WTO) is currently re-evaluating the Agreement. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has raised a few objections. It deplores that the European Union presents to WTO suggestions to liberalise services without involving the social partners in this process and without thoroughly evaluating the effects on the workers in Europe and in the developing countries. It is a good thing that the EU decided to present no suggestions anymore with regard to education, health care and audiovisual services, but it maintains its demand to liberalise the water market in the developing countries. This is odd, says ETUC, because the EU refuses to open its own water market. So, why does it expect the developing countries to do this? There is indeed a risk of less developed countries losing their elbow room to pursue a local policy that guarantees water supply to all. Also the proposal of the EU to adapt the procedure for negotiations on services is not to the liking of ETUC. It demands, further, a clear regulatory framework and serious guarantees for the workers' rights before the

EU liberalises services of general economic interest such as the postal services.

BATU ORGANISED ITS CONGRESS IN BANGKOK

BATU, our regional organisation in Asia, assembled its Congress in Bangkok on 10-15 July 2005. The Congress elected a new Board: Mukhlesur Rahman of BSSF-Bangladesh was elected President, whereas Necie Lucero was confirmed in her office of Secretary General. Shouket Ali of APTUC-Pakistan was appointed Deputy Secretary General, and Reckson Silaban of SBSI-Indonesia will hold the office of Treasurer. The Congress debated on new governance and took a stand in favour of the unification process in which WCL and ICFTU are negotiating on the creation of a new international trade union organisation to which other democratic and independent confederations would affiliate.

WEBSITE OF BATU SAARC

BATU SAARC is an organisation of the Brotherhood of Asian Trade Unions – BATU, our regional organisation in Asia. The secretariat of BATU SAARC was created ten years ago. One of its roles is to coordinate the programme of Wereldsolidariteit/Solidarité Mondiale by means of seminars, technical assistance, development projects for member organisations of WCL and BATU... The secretariat is organised by turns. After India and Sri Lanka, it has been Bangladesh's turn since March 2002. The members of BATU SAARC are APTUC (Pakistan), BSSF (Bangladesh), CFTUI and ICL (India), NWC (Sri Lanka) and Decont (Nepal). The Internet has become a necessary instrument for trade unions. Like BATU and WCL, BATU SAARC has now its own website. **For further details:** <http://www.batu-saarc.org> and <http://www.batu.org.ph>

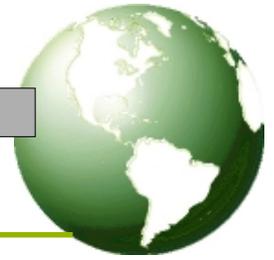
Schedule of activities

August 2005

- 30: Solidarnosc / Poland: Extraordinary Congress (Gdansk).

September 2005

- 04: WCL – Executive Committee (Brussels);
- 04-08: Global March against Child Labour - Second Children's World Congress on Child Labour and Education (New Delhi / India);
- 04-08: UNCTAD - Expert meeting on methodologies, classifications, quantification and development impacts of non-tariff barriers (Geneva);
- 08: CNV – International Committee (Utrecht / Netherlands);
- 10: International day against poverty and for the democratisation of the institutions (Assisi / Italy);
- 14-16: UN - Millennium Review (New York / USA).



Trade Action

FIOST ORGANISED EUROPEAN BOARD IN LITHUANIA

On 12-14 June, the European Board of FIOST met in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius. This meeting of the International Federation of Trade Unions of Transport Workers was



organised with support from the local Lithuanian Transport Federation (LTF). The debates were centred on the recent development in the European Union and their influence on the European transport sector. Another important topic were the shifts within the international trade union movement. If WCL and ICFTU constitute one new international trade union together with other organisations that are currently without international affiliation, what will the place of FIOST in this structure? The European Board meeting was followed by a seminar in which a lot of Lithuanian transport workers took an active part. The debates were about the structural financing of Lithuanian transport by the European Union, the social security system and the importance of the social dialogue. The participants concluded that the citizens should be properly informed of the policy as well as involved in it. Political decisions have to be made in consultation with all the social and political parties as well as with the trade unions. The EU has to spread information on the liberalisation processes, so that the trade unions can respond and avoid or reduce the negative effects on the workers. The EU member states have to pursue equal quality of work and safety at work. FIOST and LTF also take the view that the negative effects of the migration waves have to be evaluated and dealt with. In their opinion economic development has to go hand in hand with an improvement of the situation of the workers. Both the pension system and the social security system in the EU are capable of improvement. Lastly, FIOST and LTF affirm, also the general standards for vocational training have to be defined.

FIOST CONDEMNS BOMB ATTACKS IN LONDON

The International Federation of Trade Unions of Transport Workers (FIOST), affiliated to WCL, strongly condemned by circular letter the bomb attacks of 7 July in London. FIOST calls the attacks on innocent citizens, who took the train and the Underground to go to work,

a criminal act and insists on a fast and thorough investigation. FIOST expressed its solidarity and condolences to the next of kin, friends and colleagues of the victims.

TEACHERS' UNIONS AT LAST RECOGNISED IN BOLOGNA PROCESS

Education International (EI) – the pan-European structure to which also the World Confederation of Teachers is affiliated – has been officially admitted as an adviser to the European Ministerial Conference in charge of higher education. This was decided at the recent meeting of the Conference, on 19-20 May in Mons (Belgium). This is an important development for which the teachers' unions have lobbied for a long time already. As from now, they can keep a close eye on the evolution of the Bologna process and stress its social dimension. This process, which was started up in 1999, is aimed to harmonise the national higher education systems of the EU member states and to create a European education area. An important element is the endeavour to bring diplomas and certificates to the same level. With Ukraine, Moldavia, Armenia and Azerbaïdzhan recently joining in, all the European member states – except for Belarus – are now part of the Bologna process. But it is not a purely European story, says WCT: *"In view of the growing mobility in higher education, the process also influences directly or indirectly the development in education in Africa, Asia and Latin America."*

WFIW APPROVES UNIFICATION PLAN WITH ICEM

The talks between WCL and ICFTU on the creation of a new, pluralistic organisation herald an era of big changes in the international trade union movement. Also at the Trade Action level – in the ITFs of WCL and the GUFs of ICFTU – this development is clearly perceptible. During its Congress in Dakar (Senegal), on 24 June, the World Federation of Industry Workers (WFIW), affiliated to WCL, signed an agreement with the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine & General Workers' Unions (ICEM), affiliated to ICFTU. Both trade federations want to intensify their cooperation and eventually merge into one single international trade federation. This integration will be carried through in three stages. Until its Congress in October 2007, ICEM will create two extra seats for WFIW observers in the presidium (Western Europe) and two in the Executive Committee. These observers will have the right to speak, but not to vote. As from 2007 until the ICEM Congress in 2011, another 2 x 2 WFIW leaders will become part of the above-mentioned governing bodies, this time with the right to vote. As from 2011, the integration will be a fact and former WFIW members will get access to presidium offices and be able to sit on the Executive Committee. Through this unification WFIW wants to strengthen itself in order better to protect the rights of

the industry workers worldwide and to constitute a countervailing power against privatisation and neo-liberal decision-making in the sector.

SEVEN WORKERS FIRED BECAUSE OF PARTICIPATION IN TRADE UNION MEETING

On 4-9 February, the International Federation Textile and Clothing (IFTC) organised in Pedro Sula, Honduras, a seminar for its Latin American member organisations. It wanted to examine how the abolition of the international quotas in the textile and garment sector affect Latin America economically and socially. Another aim was to work out strategies to monitor this transition through the trade unions. In this respect, the Federation fully agrees with the position of the International Labour Organisation that the competitive strength of the companies and countries should be raised by improving the working conditions and providing more training. Social dialogue is indeed a better instrument for growth and development than social confrontation. So, IFTC and WCL were flabbergasted at the news that seven workers of the company Coats Honduras had been fired for the simple reason of attending, on 5 February, a trade union meeting at the headquarters of CGT, the member organisation of WCL in Honduras. IFTC and WCL strongly condemn this act, which is an obvious violation of the ILO conventions 87 and 98 on the freedom of association and collective bargaining. Also the national legislation of Honduras is violated. By letter to the country's authorities IFTC has expressed its indignation at this inexcusable act, demanding all-out efforts to have the seven workers immediately and unconditionally re-employed. WCL joins IFTC in this demand and will do its utmost to accelerate the procedure.

CONCRETE AID FOR TAXI DRIVERS IN SRI LANKA

After the seaquake of December 2004, the international department of CNV (the Netherlands) has immediately offered emergency aid to our Sri Lankan member organisation, the National Workers' Congress (NWC). This local trade union visited several victimised members and mapped out their needs. It appeared from its report that the transport sector, among others, needs aid and concrete projects for the reconstruction. First, there are the drivers who own their motorised three-wheel taxis, which got heavily damaged or in some cases just disappeared in the tidal wave. Then there are the drivers who were employed by private bus companies and lost their job because their employer could not repair or replace the damaged vehicles. Moreover, many taxi drivers are threatened with dismissal because they lost their bicycle or scooter and cannot get at their work in time. Together with NWC, CNV-International worked out a plan of action to help all these workers. "We will buy six three-wheel taxis, two scooters and nine bicycles and have damaged taxis repaired", says Conny Wedda, programme assistant for Asia at CNV-International. "We will also draw up an operating plan and create a fund for the project." This reconstruction project is not an isolated action, but fits in with arrangements made with the international trade union movement. With *Wereldsolidariteit* – a social organisation in which ACV/CSC from Belgium plays an important role – it was agreed, for instance, the CNV would

take care of the transport sector whereas ACV/CSC would support projects in fishery and in the free trade zones in the south of Sri Lanka.

TRADE UNION WORK HIGHLY NECESSARY IN INDIA

"Trade union work in India is highly necessary", is the general conclusion of CNV-International after a working visit to the country. Large parts of the Indian trade union movement are closely related



to political parties and can therefore hardly be called independent. Despite everything, our member organisation, the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of India (CFTUI), tries to start up, on an independent basis, concrete projects to support and to improve their situation. CNV visited two of these projects in the field. In India three million women in all are active as 'Anganwari workers' in health care. They look after mother and child from the pregnancy until the child reaches the age of six. Since this is considered social work, the Anganwari just get an expense allowance of around 40 euros a month (less than the minimum wage!). For this amount of money they work, like all civil servants, 48 hours a week. Nor are they entitled to paid sick-leave. The Anganwari union in the state of Bihar, which has 15,000 members, has tried for five years, through lawsuits, to have these women recognised as civil servants so that they can enjoy the same rights. Because the authorities refuse to continue the negotiations, CFTUI has regularly taken joint actions with the union. It also contemplates creating a nationwide Anganwari union.

In the state of Jharkhand the transport federation *Jharkhand State Transport Corporation Karmchari Sang* tries to do something about the wretched situation of the 2850 bus drivers, ticket sellers, mechanics... employed by a public bus company. Since 1995 they have not received any wages anymore because, according to the management, the company suffers to big losses. According to the trade unions, the managers are incompetent and their appointment was an act of nepotism. There were frequent negotiations about the payment of the wages, which equally frequently ended up in strikes, demonstrations and even hunger strikes. All in vain, however. Only after the union had started legal proceedings with support from CFTUI, the management began, in 2002, to pay half the monthly wages. Unfortunately they soon stopped doing this, so that a new lawsuit before the Supreme Court was necessary. Thanks to the ruling of the Court, they have been paid again half their monthly wages since January of this year. CNV-International and CFTUI keep a close eye on the case and have advanced the plan to earmark the wage arrears for a pension system.

