

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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EU Core Labour Standards Report

Brussels, 6 April 2009 (ITUC OnLine): : A new report by the world's largest trade union body, the ITUC, on core labour standards in the European Union has been issued today to coincide with the Trade Policy Review of the 27 EU member states at the WTO.

The report underlines the ratification by all 27 countries of the eight ILO fundamental conventions but notes shortcomings in the application and enforcement of core labour standards, particularly with regard to anti-unions discrimination, the right to strike and an increasingly large gender pay gap in a majority of the countries.

Despite full ratification of all eight ILO conventions there are shortcomings in both Eastern and Western EU member states. It is worryingly that anti-union behaviour, such as hostile attitudes, threats, failure to cooperate on collective bargaining and disciplinary actions against trade unionists, is growing in the private sector and among major international and national employers notwithstanding the prohibition of anti-union discrimination in most EU member states.

Furthermore, as indicated in the report, some of the older EU member states, like Belgium, Finland, France, Greece and United Kingdom, have initiated new legislative measures that severely limit the right to strike or leaving the door open for interpretation of collective action. In cross-border situations within the EU, the European Court of Justice has introduced a proportionality assessment as the over-riding criteria of legality of a collective action, which is a violation of the right to freedom of association – a deeply concerning development.

The report also refers to discrimination in employment and equal remuneration, which is still very much prevalent in many EU member states. Despite laws for equal treatment, indirect wage discrimination against women remains a serious problem, and women in Europe earn on an average 10 to 30 percent less than their male counterparts.

Finally, the report notes with great concern that discrimination in employment, education and housing against the Roma ethnic minority still exists in many of the Eastern European member states.

To read the full report: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/FINAL_EU_CLS_2009_report_1_.pdf

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