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Croatia: Advances Needed in Labour Rights

Brussels, 24 March 2010 (ITUC OnLine): A new report by the ITUC on core labour standards in Croatia, published to coincide with the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) review of their trade policies, has found that labour market flexibility and liberalisation are being encouraged under the pretext of bringing Croatian labour legislation in line with the European Union's established laws (the "acquis communautaires").

The report finds that the government has used European integration and harmonisation requirements as a pretext for making extensive legal reforms and reducing workers' rights. As a result, more than 80 percent of newly-employed workers are employed on a short-term basis, and many fear their contracts will not be renewed if they join a union. The large number of fixed term employment contracts indicates the serious difficulties in realising freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining in Croatia.

Discrimination in employment is prohibited, but legislative provisions are insufficient to prevent women from being discriminated against and harassed at work. Women are often employed in lower paying positions in the work force, and they earn on average 20 percent less than men of equal age, work experience, and education. Furthermore, Romani face limited access to the labour market, societal violence, harassment, and discrimination.

Child labour and forced labour are not widespread problems in the country, but the report finds that children working in informal activities, many of them Romani, are not protected by the Labour Act.

Among the recommendations, the report calls on the government to ensure full respect of ILO standards on trade union rights and to strengthen its efforts to reduce the gender pay gap, including by promoting the

principle of equal pay for work of equal value in collective agreements.

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

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 155 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
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