

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Europe: Undocumented Domestic Workers Lack Protection

Brussels, 5 July 2011 (ITUC OnLine): A new report by the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency http://www.fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/home/home_en.htm has exposed serious loopholes in legal protections for undocumented migrants who are domestic workers. The survey of 10 EU Member States reveals that despite international legal requirements, employers largely control the extent to which the rights of these workers are secured.

"All the evidence shows that there is a high level of undocumented domestic and care workers in Europe. Many of these women work in inhumane conditions more than 12 hours a day and for wages below minimum standards. We expect the EU to live up to its values and commitments, and make sure that all workers including those with no valid work permit have their fundamental rights protected," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The report confirms that in the EU, as in other regions, undocumented workers' access to justice is hampered by several obstacles including fear of deportation, and that proper access to fundamental rights of undocumented domestic workers is largely determined by their employers. Yet according to international law, every country has an obligation to protect the human and fundamental labour rights of all workers, regardless of their migratory status. The report further highlights the key roles trade unions and NGOs play to stop the exploitation and help undocumented workers claim their rights.

The ITUC is calling EU countries to ratify and put in practice the newly adopted ILO Convention on domestic workers, to ensure that the rights of all those working in the care and domestic sectors are fully respected. An overwhelming majority of European countries supported the adoption of the ILO Convention last month, with only the UK and the Czech Republic abstaining during the vote. Prior to the adoption of the Convention, on May 12, the European Parliament had already expressed its full support for such instrument:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=TA&reference=P7-TA-2011-0237&language=EN&ring=B7-2011-0296>)

"The International Convention on domestic workers is a key instrument to end 21st-century slavery, and the trade union movement will use all its strength to ensure that governments ratify and implement it. We will hold every single country accountable for their international obligations," concluded Burrow.

For further information:

ITUC Publication on domestic workers: "ITUC Action Guide on Decent Work, Decent Life for Domestic Workers" 2011: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-action-guide-decent-work.html>

ITUC Publication "Living in Economic Insecurity: Women in Precarious Work" 2011: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/living-with-economic-insecurity.html>

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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