

March 2008



Ver.di prepares further strike action

Workers in public transport, waste removal and many other sectors in Germany have been taking part in warning strikes over the past weeks. However, their protests have not been heeded by the authorities. PSI affiliate Ver.di is now preparing for a strike that might become one of the biggest ever in the history of German public services.

For 13 years, most of Germany's public sector workers received salary increases at a lower rate than in the private sector and often below the national inflation rate. Ver.di members demanded a salary increase of 8% in this year's collective bargaining campaign.

So far, attempts to reach an agreement with the public employers have failed. The government has offered a 5 percent increase over two years, accompanied by a longer working week – an offer that Ver.di has rejected, as it again does not compensate for inflation. If no agreement is reached, larger strikes will be held over the country in April.

Ver.di, together with another civil servants organisation, is carrying out a wide public campaign to inform the public about the valuable contributions public service workers make to the well being of their society, about their increased stress and workload and an inadequate income.

UN Commission on the Status of Women



PSI, Education International and the ITUC sent a delegation of 40 women to the 52nd session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), which took place in New York from 25 February to 7 March. The main theme under discussion was “Financing for gender equality and the empowerment of women”. This was therefore a key opportunity for trade unions to make the link between decent work, gender equality and development, ahead of the Review Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Doha late 2008. Lobbying work by the trade union delegation yielded some positive outcomes, with governments finally recognising the link between gender equality and access to “quality, affordable and universally accessible health care and services” (including education and social services), as well as access to “full and productive employment and decent work for all”.

[Click here](#) to read the meeting report.

Imprisoned Iranian trade union leader receives Dutch trade union rights award



The imprisoned Iranian trade union leader Mansour Osanloo was symbolically presented with the Febe Elisabeth Velasquez Prize during a ceremony in Amsterdam. The prize is awarded every two years to someone who campaigns for the observance of trade union rights under difficult circumstances and at personal risk.

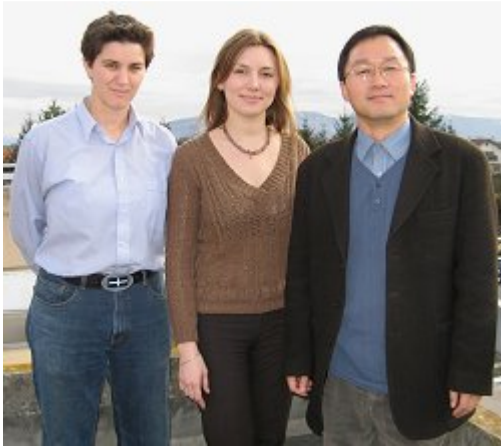
Osanloo is the leader of the independent Tehran Bus Workers' Union. In October 2007 he was sentenced to five years in prison on trumped up charges of endangering Iran's national security and criticising the regime.

Agnes Jongerius, President of the Dutch Confederation of Trade Unions, FNV. Handed the award symbolically to the president of the

Dutch Trade Union Bondgenoten, Henk van der Kolk, who aims to visit to Teheran later this year to hand over the award to Osanloo personally.

To learn more about Osanloo and to join the campaign to get him out of prison go to www.freeosanloo.org

Global Labour University students visit PSI



L-R: Karen Douglas, Kateryna Yarmolyuk and Kim Kang Jeung

Young members of three of PSI's affiliated unions are participating in the 2007-2008 Masters course at the Global Labour University in Kassel, Germany, on Labour Policy and Globalisation.

Kateryna Yarmolyuk from the Public Services Workers' Trade Union in Ukraine received the PSI Heinz Kluncker/Jerry Wurf award for young trade unionists. Kateryna already has a Law Degree, but she was eager to take the course so that she can better help her union with labour policy and legislation.

Kim Kang Jeung is a member of PSI affiliate Korea National Electrical Workers' Union. He is doing his internship in the PSI Head Office, focusing on the Workers' Initiative and labour-

management cooperation.

Karen Douglas is from the Community and Public Sector Union - State Public Service Federation CPSU-SPSF Victoria Branch, a PSI affiliate, in Australia. Karen and Kateryna are both following internships at the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

The three young students said the Global Labour University course was a great way for them to learn more about trade unionism, especially in a global context. There are 19 participants from 18 countries, who are all sharing their experience. As mentioned last month, the deadline for the next courses in Germany and India is 1st April 2008. PSI will be offering sponsorship for one young person, under 35 years of age. For more information, see <http://www.global-labour-university.org/>.

Launch of the Aqua Publica Europea network



On 18 March, the Water Pavilion in Paris will host the launch of the Aqua Publica Europea network, the European association for public water management. The network brings together European public water and sanitation operators in order to promote public water management at a European level and

beyond.

Aqua Publica European will enable an exchange of information, expertise and collaboration between public water companies and/or local authorities. Its aim is to encourage scientific, technical, economical and administrative actions relating to water management.

The network will represent public water companies in European and international institutions and bodies, present in different continents that are directly or indirectly involved in water management.

The founding members are made up of public water companies and local public company umbrella associations from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy and Switzerland. For more details, including the Programme for 18 March, see http://www.eaudeparis.fr/cgi/pavillondeleau/aqua_publica.shtml#anglais

Global Forum on Human Resources for Health



Close to 1,500 health experts, ministers of health, and representatives of health workers converged in Kampala, Uganda on 2-7 March for the first Global Forum on Human Resources for Health.

Participants discussed how to improve employment and working conditions of health workers, what measures to take to address the increasing flows of migration of health personnel from

developing to developed countries, and how to retain and recruit new health professionals and strengthen health systems.

The forum was organised by the WHO-sponsored Global Health Workforce Alliance, of which PSI is a founding member.

Participants endorsed the [Kampala Declaration](#) and an [Agenda for Global Action](#). These documents are intended to “guide the initial steps in a coordinated global, regional and national response to the worldwide shortage and misdistribution of health workers.”

But the most powerful statement to come out of the forum was the gathering itself of the hundreds of committed participants from every corner of the world and their willingness to join efforts to solve this critical problem. PSI delegates participated in the forum and we will continue to support the GHWA’s role as a catalyst and a global convener to bring together different stakeholders for learning, dialogue, advocacy and joint action.

UNCTAD XII: Trade and Development Conference



The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) will hold its 12th Conference in Accra, Ghana on 20-25 April. UNCTAD is a subsidiary organ of the UN General Assembly and has a mandate ‘to promote the development-friendly integration of developing countries into the world economy.’ Participants at the UNCTAD XII Conference will discuss: strengthening

policy coherence on trade and development issues; enhancing the enabling environment to increase productive capacity of developing country economies; reviewing key trade and development links as well as new realities in the global economy; and strengthening the role of UNCTAD.

In cooperation with ITUC, PSI will be organising a delegation of public sector trade unionists to the Conference, which will also participate in the pre-Conference Civil Society activities. The key message of the trade unions is to support the role of UNCTAD in ensuring that trade and investments lead to decent work and positive social outcomes for workers and their families. UNCTAD has identified migration as one of its priority issues in the coming years. PSI will hold a workshop on migration during the civil society activities. For more information on the delegation activities, contact svend.robinson@world-psi.org.

Information on the UNCTAD XII Conference can be found at www.unctad.org and the Civil Society activities at www.unctadxii-csoforum.org.

PSI condemns violence in Gaza and Israel



PSI joins the ITUC in expressing its deepest sympathies and regrets to all the individuals, families and workers affected by the continuing violence in Gaza and Israel. PSI urges leaders in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank to negotiate in good faith, agree a ceasefire and take concrete steps towards implementing a road map to peace.

"PSI calls for an immediate end to the cycle of violence which is causing untold hardship and suffering in Gaza and in Israel", said

Peter Waldorff, PSI General Secretary. "We condemn the recent Israeli military incursions into Gaza, which resulted in the deaths of more than 100 inhabitants, including women and children. Equally, PSI deplores the recent attack by a Palestinian gunman on a Jewish seminary in Jerusalem, in which eight people were killed, as well as the continued rocket attacks on Israel. Without peace and security there is no possible means of building a future for all those living in Gaza, the West Bank and Israel, and surrounding countries," he added.

Sub-regional meeting for Southern Africa



Forty delegates including country representative

s, observers and sub-regional staff attended the PSI Sub-Regional Advisory Committee (SUBRAC) for southern Africa at the end of February in South Africa.

Guest speakers from FEDUSA and COSATU discussed the proposed legislation on the Single Public Service in South Africa. Both have grave concerns with the proposed legislation because there is no proof that the model will work or be financially sustainable, and they believe it will entrench inequalities amongst municipalities.

The meeting elected representatives for the Health Services Task Force and the Utilities Advisory Group. Swaziland was nominated to facilitate the establishment of youth structures in the region and South Africa for LGBT structures.

Korea/US Free trade agreement: The union reaction

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Korean Confederation of Trade Unions chairman Lee Seok-haeng met with John Sweeney, president of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations in Washington in February. The two groups are opposing the Korea-US (KORUS) free trade agreement.

The two trade union confederations agreed to make an all-out effort to prevent the two governments from ratifying an FTA.

To read the joint union declaration, [click here](#).

Brazil: Historic signature of ILO Conventions after three decades of struggle



The Brazilian national trade union central CUT and its affiliated unions and confederations, from both the public and private sectors, celebrated a historic decision when ILO Conventions 151 and 158 were signed by President Lula and sent to the National Congress for ratification on 14 February 2008.

"Although the two conventions are not in force yet, today we are celebrating the affirmation of a positive agenda, an agenda for development and progress in achieving workers' rights in the public and private sectors. We must now keep the pressure on to ensure Congress approves the Conventions as quickly as

possible", said Artur Henrique, President of the CUT.

Convention 151 provides legal guarantees for collective bargaining, freedom of association and trade union rights in the public sector. Convention 158 removes employers' right to dismiss workers without cause, which represents a major step in reducing the high turnover of labour. This step by the government indicates its intention to adopt the conventions as policy.

During his audience with Lula, Artur also emphasised the importance of the work by the ILO and PSI to make this achievement possible.

Labour and the Challenges of Globalization



This book published by Pluto Press critically examines the responses of workers to the challenges posed by the neoliberal restructuring of the global economy.

The study identifies new or renewed labour responses among formal economy workers as well as those on the periphery, including street-traders, homeworkers and other 'informal economy workers.

The book contains ten country studies, including India, China, South Korea, Japan, Germany, Sweden, Canada, South Africa, Argentina and Brazil. It argues that workers and trade unions, through intensive collaboration with other social forces across the world, can challenge the logic of neoliberal globalization.

The book can be ordered from the Pluto Press website <http://www.plutobooks.com/cgi-local/whatsnew.pl>.

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