

Globalising Decent Work Decent Life!
Newsletter
January 2008

Over many years, Solidar has worked - in alliance with Trade Unions and other progressive forces - to make access to Decent Work Decent Life possible for all people of the world. In early 2006, Solidar launched its Jobs Jobs Jobs Decent Work Project (supported by EuropeAid) in order to give new strength to the campaign. This newsletter will give periodic updates on Decent Work events and actions organised by Solidar and its partner organisations and will celebrate all those people, organisations, and institutions that are making their own contribution to Globalising Decent Work.

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1. DECENT WORK DECENT LIFE CAMPAIGN UPDATE

1.1 Decentralised World Social Forum in action for Decent Work!

On 26 January, the Belgian Social Forum organised a series of activities in Brussels for the WSF 2008. Social Alert International and Solidar, both members of the Decent Work Alliance, participated in an 11-stop alternative tour of Brussels by receiving the public at a decent work stand in the city centre. The WSF event was also used by the Belgian Social Forum to launch the [Call to action for Decent Work Decent Life](#) at the national level and to collect signatures for the petition.



Alexandre Seron of CNCD-11.11.11 speaks of 200+ signatures in support of the Call to Action for Decent Work Decent Life being collected from passers-by in only 3 hours.

Supporters of the campaign should note in their diary that a series of events and activities on decent work will be held in Brussels and in towns of the Walloon region of Belgium during the Week of International Solidarity (12-19 April, 2008).

Belgian partners have become the first to launch the Call to Action for Decent Work Decent Life at the national level. As well as CNCD-11.11.11, the Belgian campaign regroups both Walloon and Flemish NGOs (including Solidar members FOS and Solidarité Socialiste) as well as trade unions including the national FGTB/ABVV and CSC/ACV unions.

This is most definitely a successful experience of cooperation and an encouraging one for the other national launches that will follow in 2008.

Links:

- The CNCD-11.11.11 pamphlet on decent work for the Belgian campaign is available in French at www.cncd.be/fichiers/travaildecent/080128_depliant_travaildecent.pdf
- For more information on the Belgian decent work campaign, contact [Alexandre Seron](#)

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2. POLICY UPDATE

2.1 Decent Work in developing countries

- *UN Commission on Social Development: "Promoting Full Employment And Decent Work For All"*



The relationship between the creation of decent work, poverty eradication and social integration will be at the heart of the Forty-Sixth session of the Commission for Social Development to be held from 6 to 15 February 2008 in New York.

Since the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995, the United Nations has emphasized the role of productive employment in reducing poverty and promoting social development.

At the 2005 World Summit, world leaders made the commitment to strongly support a fair globalization and resolved to make the goals of full and productive employment and decent work for all, including for women and young people, a central objective of (their) relevant national and international policies (see General Assembly resolution 60/1, para. 47).

In keeping with that commitment, the Secretary-General, in his 2006 report on the work of the Organization, proposed to include a new target - echoing the commitment of the 2005 World Summit - under Millennium Development Goal 1. Moreover, in paragraph 5 of the ministerial declaration adopted by the Economic and Social Council on 5 July 2006, participants in the high-level segment resolved to promote full and productive employment and decent work for all.

Further, the Economic and Social Council at its session in 2007 adopted resolution 2007/2 entitled *"The role of the United Nations system in providing full and productive employment and decent work for all"*, in which the Council invited the United Nations system to develop, with the assistance of the International Labour Organization (ILO), mechanisms for sharing their expertise on employment and decent work and for assessing the impact of relevant policies on employment, with special attention to youth and women.

The Secretary General's report adopted on 23 November 2007 will open the works of the Commission for Social Development. The document addresses some key recommendations to the CSD, amongst others that:



- *Social protection systems should adapt to current labour-market conditions in order to provide economic security. Special attention should be given to extending the effectiveness and coverage of social protection, including coverage for workers in the informal economy. Promoting a **global social floor**, consisting of universal child benefits, access to health services and pensions for older persons, should be pursued.*
- *Greater attention should be given to developing appropriate institutions and regulation, including frameworks for **social dialogue**, as important elements for the effective and fair functioning of labour markets, as well as the adoption and implementation of labour laws that protect workers' rights.*
- *National regulatory frameworks should be reviewed and strengthened with a view to ensuring that **core labour standards** are fully enforced in both the formal and informal sectors.*
- *The **United Nations** system should pursue more effective mainstreaming of the goals of full employment and decent work into its policies and programmes in support of national development efforts.*

Links:

- [Report of the Secretary General, 'Promoting Full Employment and Decent Work for All'](#)
- All documents related to the next CSD session can be found at www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/csocd2008.htm

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2.2 Decent Work in Europe

- *Has the European Court of Justice opened the door for wage dumping in the EU?*



Has the European Court of Justice (ECJ) opened the door for wage dumping in the EU? This is the question people in Europe asked themselves after the 18 December ECJ ruling known as the *Laval or Vaxholm case*.

The facts - The Latvian company *Laval un Partneri* posted, between May and December 2004, 35 workers to building sites in Sweden. Against Laval's refusal to sign a collective agreement and to respect Swedish legislation on working conditions and minimum wages, Swedish Unions took action.

The Swedish Labour Court referred the case to the ECJ.

Contrary to the Advocate-General's opinion - who argued that

"Where a Member State has no system for declaring collective agreements to be of universal application, Directive 96/71/EC [...] concerning the posting of workers [...] must be interpreted as not preventing trade unions from attempting, by means of collective action in the form of a blockade and solidarity action, to compel a service provider of another Member State to subscribe to the rate of pay determined in accordance with a collective agreement which is applicable in practice to domestic undertakings in the same sector that are in a similar situation and was concluded in the first Member State, to whose territory workers of the other Member State are temporarily posted, provided that the collective action is motivated by public interest objectives, such as the protection of workers and the fight against social dumping, and is not carried out in a manner that is disproportionate to the attainment of those objectives",

the Court concluded that the Posting Workers Directive does not impose an obligation on foreign service providers to respect any working standards beyond the minimum standards as set in the directive:

1. *"Article 49 EC and Article 3 of Directive 96/71/EC [...] are to be interpreted as precluding a trade union [...] from attempting, by means of collective action in the form of a blockade ('blockad') of sites such as that at issue in the main proceedings, to force a provider of services established in another Member State to enter into negotiations with it on the rates of pay for*

posted workers and to sign a collective agreement the terms of which lay down, as regards some of those matters, more favourable conditions than those resulting from the relevant legislative provisions, while other terms relate to matters not referred to in Article 3 of the directive”.

2. “Where there is a prohibition in a Member State against trade unions undertaking collective action with the aim of having a collective agreement between other parties set aside or amended, Articles 49 EC and 50 EC preclude that prohibition from being subject to the condition that such action must relate to terms and conditions of employment to which the national law applies directly”.

The ruling in the Laval case, which concerns fundamental workers rights in Europe, has raised strong reactions and fears about the impact it could have among people in Europe who feel that once again the Lisbon Treaty will not leave them with sufficient hope for decent work for a decent life.

Among others, the European Trade union Confederation observed that *“there could also be implications for unions’ ability to promote equal treatment and protection of workers regardless of nationality and there will also be concern that unions’ ability to guarantee these objectives is threatened by the free movement of services principle.”*

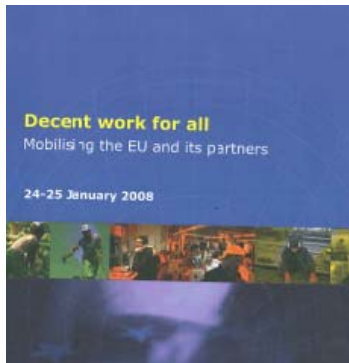
Links:

- [Communication COM \(2007\) 0304 from the Commission
"Posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services: Maximising its benefits and potential while guaranteeing the protection of workers"](#)
- [Directive 96/71/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 1996 concerning the posting of workers in the framework of the provision of services](#)
- [ETUC reactions](#)
- [JUDGMENT OF THE COURT \(Grand Chamber\), 18 December 2007](#)
- [OPINION OF ADVOCATE GENERAL MENGOZZI, delivered on 23 May 2007](#)

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- *'Decent work for all' an internal and external strategy for the EU and its partners*



The European Commission (Directorates General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities; External Relations; Trade; Development; and EuropeAid) held a conference on decent work - *'Decent work for all - mobilising the EU and its partners'* - in Brussels on 24-25 January.

On the first panel, Solidar Secretary-General Conny Reuter was invited to share the views of civil society on decent work. His intervention, centred on the Decent Work Decent Life Campaign (www.decentwork.org) and accompanied by a slide-show on decent work, was a highlight of the first day's activities.

Mr Reuter took the opportunity to remind those working on the decent work agenda of the need to strengthen the social pillar of the European Union through the new cycle of the Lisbon Strategy. *"Decent Work must become the core of the Lisbon strategy if we are to ask that people trust the European project"*. Insofar as the EU's external policies are concerned, he urged the European Commission to work for greater coherence between different policy areas, namely external trade, development policy, and migration policies that risk provoking a heavy brain drain in the South. He stressed that *"to be credible the EU needs to be coherent in order not to take with one hand what it gives with the other"*.

More specifically, there was widespread agreement that the external and internal dimensions of the Lisbon Agenda must not be dissociated if decent work is to be mainstreamed in policy making and become a reality for all. This is in line with the December 2007 European Council's commitment to using the decent work agenda as a global instrument to foster development (European Council, 14 December 2007, § 50).

Other participants at the conference stated that the EU must act to strengthen multilateral organisations and in particular the ILO. The EU itself recognises that certain of the ILO's conventions (so-called up to date Conventions), some of which have not yet been ratified by a number of EU member states, would help strengthen the social dimension of the *aquis Communautaire*. In ratifying and enforcing these ILO conventions, European countries would give a clear message to the rest of the world that they mean business with the decent work agenda.



Links:

- [European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs, International Affairs](#)
- [European Commission Conference on Decent Work for All](#)
- [European Council, 14 December 2007, Conclusions](#)

2.3 International Institutions

- *Awareness-raising for decent work all the more important after Davos 2008*



This year's World Economic Forum took place amid significant worries for the state of the global economy and the enduring impact of the US sub-prime mortgage crisis. This notwithstanding, the International Trade Union Confederation delegation to Davos left Switzerland with a feeling that the business world is being complacent in regard to the effects of the financial crisis on the 'real' economy. In respect of decent work, it is certain that if the global financial economy continues to be exempt from adequate regulation, the vulnerability of workers worldwide will only increase. To translate these worries into hard fact, in the 15 states of the old European Union (prior to March), the ITUC recalls that

the share of national income going to wages fell from around 70% in the 1980s to less than 60% in 2005. In the developing world, the situation has been deteriorating since the 1960s. These facts alone, without even mentioning the worsening conditions of employment and public services, are enough to remind us all of the need to get the messages of the decent work campaign across to as many people as possible.

Links:

- [ITUC press release on the WEF](#)
- [The statement of labour leaders to the WEF](#)

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3. FOCUS ON...

3.1 Solidar Member Activities

- Banana Link: towards decent work in the Latin American banana industry



Following a three-day meeting in the Nicaraguan capital, Managua, hosted by Banana Link's trade union partners from the banana zone of **North West Nicaragua**, a challenging agenda was set for the years ahead in the struggle for decent work in the Latin American banana industry.

Twenty delegates from plantation workers' unions across Latin America were joined by representatives from British trade unions (Amicus, GMB, UNISON, Usdaw, NTUC and STUC) and the International Union of Food and Agricultural Workers to take stock of their joint long-term task of bringing about decent working conditions and living wages in the continent's banana plantations.

The Latin American and UK partners developed the next stage of the **Banana Link Union to Union** programme, with the aim of "taking solidarity to the next level". The Programme will focus on:

- organising, training and defending the legally enshrined rights of young and migrant workers;
- strengthening the leadership roles of women and their involvement in political and economic advocacy work;
- coordination and advocacy along the tropical fruit supply chains (including workers from other tropical fruit plantations like pineapples or melons) from field to supermarket;
- exchanging good union practices and strengthening the direct union to union links, both within Latin America and between the UK and Latin America, including through educational work at all levels of the UK trade union movement.

To find out more about the Union to Union Programme and the work of Banana Link visit

- www.bananalink.org.uk

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4. DECENT WORK MILESTONES

4.1 Who said what?

"We have a development emergency. Just because it does not look like a disaster, like a tsunami, it does not make this crisis any less urgent. There is so much to do but very little time."

Queen Rania of Jordan, talking at the WEF in Davos last week.

She was speaking about the goals agreed under the auspices of the United Nations in 2000 and said that in relation to the central one - halving extreme poverty and hunger by 2015 - some progress had been made but it had now slowed down.

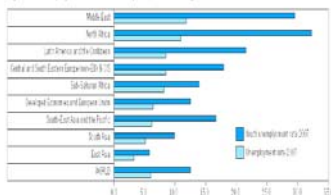
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5. RESOURCES AND DOCUMENTS

5.1 Reports

- *ILO, Global Employment Trends 2008*

Figure 6: Unemployment rates total and youth, world and regions, 2007



ILO projects global economic turbulence could generate five million more unemployed in 2008 -

The economic turbulence resulting from the credit market crisis and the rise in oil prices could spur an increase of 5 million unemployed men and women, the International Labour Office warned in a recent report, [Global Employment Trends 2008](#). ILO Director General Juan Somavia, in commenting on prospects for 2008, said "This year's global jobs picture is one of contrasts and uncertainty".

He also added that "though more people are in work than ever before, this doesn't mean that these jobs are decent jobs. Too many people, if not unemployed, remain among the ranks of the working poor, the vulnerable or the discouraged."

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6. AGENDA

Upcoming events:

Date	What	Where	Organisers
6 to 15 February 2008	Forty-Sixth session of the Commission for Social Development	New York	UN CSD

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