



## PERC ACTIVITIES

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### World Day for Decent Work 2011

Since 2008 the ITUC has been organising the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW) on 7 October. This is a day for mobilisation all over the world: one day when all the trade unions in the world stand up for decent work. Decent work must be at the centre of government actions to bring back economic growth and build a new global economy that puts people first.

### World Day For Decent Work

Go to the [WDDW website](#) and sign up your action: be it a round table discussion, a huge demonstration, a protest letter, a flash mob action or something completely different.



Start planning now for your actions on 7 October 2011; your organisation's support is important, and you have the chance to join millions around the world in a united mobilisation for change.

## Campaign to support Georgian trade unions



The Georgian government's refusal to amend its anti-union labour legislation has prompted action to revise European Union relations with Georgia under its trade preference arrangements (GSP+). Despite repeated calls from the International Labour Organisation to remove a raft of legal obstacles to union rights, and to guarantee protection from discrimination, the Georgian government has so far refused to comply. The response has been a joint letter of ITUC and ETUC to the European Commissioner Karel De Gucht demanding an EU investigation in the violation of international labour standards in Georgia and take necessary measures to remedy the situation within GSP+ policies.

"The European Union needs to investigate Georgia's continued violations of fundamental workers' rights, and if the Georgian authorities do not bring their laws into line with ILO standards, then the EU should withdraw the trade preference arrangements which Georgia enjoys at present," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

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Bernadette Segol, General Secretary of the ETUC said "Georgia's employment laws fall way below the standards required to get trade advantages from the EU. These laws need to be amended, or the trade advantages should be withdrawn."

The letter from the ITUC and the ETUC to European Commissioner Karel De Gucht sets out the restrictions imposed by the Georgian government on the country's workforce on freedom of association and collective bargaining. It also details the absence of protection for workers from being sacked for union membership or from other forms of discrimination.

## Training for labour rights communication, 15-17 June, Moscow

The PERC, in cooperation with the ILO-ACTRAV, organised a sub-regional workshop "Training for labour rights communication" in Moscow region, on 15-17 June. Fifteen participants from the affiliated and associated organisations of the ITUC from Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine, Kazakhstan, Belarus and Russia took part in the workshop.

The workshop aimed at analysing the existing trade union experiences in the field of campaigning and communication on workers' rights, the use of new media technologies by the union structures, social media as well as to brainstorm how to contribute to better vertical and horizontal trade union communication in the framework of the PERC.

The participants were introduced to the work of the ITUC-PERC and the ILO-ACTRAV as well as to the ITUC campaigns and global actions including Play Fair, which will have a new momentum in the region linked with the European Football Championship in Ukraine, Olympic games and World Football Championship in Russia, the 7 Horrors of the World Campaign, youth campaign and Decisions for Life Campaign. Special attention was devoted to the World Day for Decent Work and the added value of globally coordinated actions to the national and local activities of unions.

In groups the participants brainstormed elements for joint actions in framework of the WDDW and the youth campaign, particularly how the actions run by the national centres can have a specific regional dimension by engaging and mutually reinforcing public relations and communication work of the national centres.

The participants also debated the proposals for the revision of the PERC communication policy and the functioning of the Russian website and agreed on the regional action plan this group would be implementing. The next meeting is planned for the autumn 2011, in Brussels.

## **Fighting precarious work and wages, PERC Women's Network sub regional meeting in the Balkans, 29 June-1-st July 2011**

The Women's Committee of the PERC together with the ILO/ACTRAV organized a sub-regional seminar in Sofia from 29 June to 1 July 2011 on: "Decent employment, decent work, decent working conditions and wages in the Balkans". The seminar is part of the PERC Women's Committee action programme for this year and was meant to strengthen the national level trade union women's committees in the Balkan region and their capacity to produce equality plans at national level to influence state institutions, government policies and trade union policies. The seminar gathered around 40 participants from nine Balkan countries. The main issues discussed during the seminar were women and precarious work, the challenges trade unions are facing on finding the proper strategy for fighting vulnerable jobs and precarious work; the situation of workers under the crisis conditions in the Balkans, the crisis and its gender dimension. The second part of the seminar was dedicated to the challenges linked with the EU accession of the Balkan countries and the gender dimension of the accession process. Lively debates took place during the last panel on trade policies and precarious work, and the role of the women's network. The women's network in the Balkans decided to elaborate a regional strategy and plan of action for future cooperation in the region, plan which will be presented at the next PERC Women's School to take place in Vilnius from 26 to 28 October.



## PERC meeting on the EU for the Danube region – OGB Headquarters, Vienna, 5 July 2011.

Following the decision of the PERC Executive Committee of March 2011, PERC and OGB joined efforts to organise a meeting on the EU Danube Strategy. The main purpose of the meeting was to fill the gaps in the trade union information and understanding of the EU strategy and try to identify the challenges and opportunities for their future involvement. To these ends the meeting brought together trade union organisations from the countries coordinating specific policy areas of the Strategy (Austria, Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and Serbia) with EU or national level officials engaged in the operation. As the Danube strategy is still in its emerging stage as policy design and implantation and little information is available, the presentation of Mr D. Fassbender, Deputy head of EU Commission Representation in Vienna and Mr R. Arbter from Austrian Federal Chancellery provided the necessary information and conceptual insights into the policy, the way it is structured and developing, the patterns of operation and how the unions can fit and use them. It was made clear that as it is still work in development and ideas are shaped on the move it is extremely important who will take the initiatives, i.e. shape the content and patterns of implementation in particular areas. Participants from the countries presented their contacts and experience with the Strategy. Some of them – e.g. Austria, Bulgaria - have been involved already and could present their country and trade union ideas, interests and priorities in the Strategy. Others are still to enter the process and provide information on the respective developments in their policy areas for coordination. The need for internal, trade union structuring of the interaction between organisations was recognised and addressed. Some possible further steps were recognised and adopted to pursue. These comprise among others:

- On European level: to test the possibility for a more structured arrangement for the social partners to take in the process – a specialised social dimension body or within the emerging structure for civil society participation.
- National confederations to contact the respective policy coordination bodies and the Contact points so as to derive maximum information on the developments in the future and possibilities for immediate involvement through project proposals.
- Serbian trade unions took the initiative to coordinate the trade union involvement and will provide the contacts and names or the colleagues to do this job. PERC will disseminate the information and support the joint ideas.
- A number of interesting suggestions were floated to start the process of developing ideas for trade union activities in the region to be further thought over, discussed and used if favorable conditions appear.

On the basis of the results of this first round of actions and the better understanding of the operation of the Strategy and wider participation of all countries concerned will decide the next steps to take.



## Empowering women's structures to influence trade union policies, sub regional seminar for the NIS, Kishinev 6 and 7 July 2011

The PERC women's committee together with the ILO/ACTRAV organized a sub-regional meeting for the women's committees in the NIS region with the purpose of empowering the women's committee to face the challenges of increased insecurity on the labour market in the region; to discuss the situation of the women on the labour market in the region, the situation of women's rights, the gender inequalities and instruments and actions to face the challenges. Around 30 participants took part in the meeting from almost all the NIS countries and the host organization CNSM. The first day was dedicated to a detailed analysis of the situation of women workers in different NIS countries and discussion on trade union policies and the role of the women's committees in finding the proper approach to face the challenges. The working groups came to proposals and ideas as concerns the functioning of the women's network in the NIS and activities to be performed. The results of the group work will be presented at the PERC Women's School in Vilnius to take place from 26 to 28 October in Vilnius. The second part of the meeting was dedicated to an analysis of the decent work, decent country programs and role of gender; Ovidiu Jurca from the ILO Budapest office presented in detail the possibilities the ILO is offering for trade unions in this direction.

The gender audits and their role for effective implementation of gender mainstreaming in the policies, programmes and trade union structures were presented by Susan Maybud from the ILO Geneva gender unit. Magnus Berge, the ILO Geneva project manager who supported this activity, expressed his interest in future collaboration with the women's committees from the region in the direction of strengthening their power and influence on trade union policies.

## Organising workers engaged into informal labour relations, 11-13 July, Tbilisi

A sub-regional meeting of leaders of unions of workers engaged into informal labour relations was organised by the PERC, the ILO-ACTRAV and the StreetNet in Tbilisi, 11-13 of July 2011. The meeting goal was to exchange unions' experiences in dealing with these workers, to analyse challenges of organising them, to identify actors towards which negotiations to promote social and economic interests of them could be undertaken, to debate issues of sustainability of the workers' organisations.

Some 30 participants took part in the meeting, from different economic sectors – street and market vending, taxi and minibus driving, textile and sewing industry, commerce and services. According to some preliminary estimation, only 200,000 workers engaged into informal labour relations are organised in the NIS region, however, the overall participation in these occupations might equal half of the entire workforce in certain countries.



The meeting was opened by Irakliy Petriashvili, President of the Georgian Trade Union Confederation, who welcomed the participants and explained the difficult situation the Georgian trade union movement is put into by the ultra-liberal government, which was undermining unions by the legislative means, by intimidation and by attempts to directly interfere in internal union affairs. He also reported that the informal economy is booming in the country, in agriculture, commerce and transport sector, these workers do not have proper status and are discriminated and deprived from labour rights protection. Through self-organising and unification these workers can obtain this protection and the GTUC has been supporting this organisation building processes.

Pat Horn, StreetNet coordinator, presented the mission and the history of her organisation, which was set up in 2002 and now unifies some 38 organisations of unions and associations of street vendors and market workers around the world. By building capacities of leaders of these organisations the StreetNet empowers their capacities to collectively bargain with employers or municipalities and landlords.

Anton Leppik summarised the experience PERC has accumulated in the work on informal employment. Two main areas are equality important for the PERC approach:

- ▶ law enforcement, when informal (or atypical) forms of labour exist despite the fact that legally they are not existing. The role of the state institutions is crucial to bring "dishonest employers" under legal frameworks, through positive or negative sanctions, including eligibility for tenders, to set up economic incentives for the workers to declare their labour, through access to social security, health and safety tutorship; increasing use of self-employment schemes to diverse segments of labour market, en fin, actually legalizing these atypical forms as the only income strategy for considerable part of workforce. In this regard, in addition to work through state institutions, unions are actually exploring different patterns of working with these individuals, bringing them within formal labour frameworks and unions.

Sergeus Glovackas of the ACTRAV informed about different organising practices existing in the region. He also introduced the ILO conventions, which particularly can be used by the unions in protecting interests of these workers. He also referred to the newly adopted ILO Convention on Domestic Workers and introduced the Decent Work country programmes existing in the region (all countries have it, apart from Russia which has special arrangements with the ILO, similar to DWCP, and Georgia). Many of the programmes include the necessity to reduce informal employment and to protect interests of those engaged in it.

Svetlana Boincean presented successes and challenges of organising workers of agricultural sector in Central Asia, particularly, in South Kazakhstan, where many migrants are working in mostly informal environment. Bettina Musiolek informed the participants about targeted campaigning the Clean Cloth Campaign is running to get workers' rights respected in textile sector, directed on giants of sports and retail industry to make them concern and act on the abuses that exist in their subcontracting and supply chains.

In discussion participants exchanged examples of organising. In Spain a special law was adopted that allows to regulate the activities of the self-employed or autonomous workers. In Georgia, the transport workers unions bargained social guarantees for its members, mostly informal drivers. In Ukraine the resistance to fiscal reform united several dozen self-accounted traders (entrepreneurs). In Kyrgyzstan the booming textile sector employs more than 200000 workers, who often work without clearly defined employment relations. In Azerbaijan, the Hidmet-Is union has been running educational campaigns and trainings and through these activities has been involving new members, including so non-traditional professions such as workers of religious institutions.

The participants brainstormed a set of recommendation that include, inter alia:

- ▶ Organisation of tripartite seminars in the countries on informal employment to get social partners aboard;
- ▶ Inclusion of informal economy challenges into ILO Decent Work country programmes by the union initiative; as well as into other related programmes the ILO is running – on migration, on child labour, on occupational health and safety;
- ▶ Campaigning to get the related ILO Convention ratified by the countries, particularly the Convention No 189 on Domestic Workers;
- ▶ Publishing and dissemination training and practical informational materials in Russian language, organising specific collective bargaining trainings for the leaders of the organisations of workers engaged in informal relations;

- ▶ Generalisation of existing materials and experiences and dissemination of a simple set of materials on organising advantages;
- ▶ Organisation of exchange visits for the leaders of the organisations so that they can study practical experiences of their colleagues from other countries;
- ▶ Organisation of technical seminar on how the workers can use the mechanisms of the ILO;
- ▶ Organisation of annual meeting of the leaders from different countries.

## Sub-regional NIS youth conference on trade union campaigning

In Baku, Azerbaijan, the PERC and the Azerbaijanis Trade Union Confederation organised two-day conference of trade union youth from the NIS region 11-12 of August. The conference discussed trade union instruments for communication and trade union campaigns.

Daniela Aleksieva, President of the PERC Youth committee, explained its work and priorities - organising and involvement of young people in union movement, youth employment and vocational education and training. She also underlined the role of young people in making trade union campaigns and actions creative and attractive, with special attention on World Day for Decent Work.

In the course of group work the participants evaluated the existing campaigns and their relevance to the youth of the region, outlined priority actions, for the WDDW, but also for other thematic campaigns. During the conference, representatives of different countries also presented their own positive practices, e.g., united day of action against austerity measures in Russia (solidarity with the EU unions) on 29 September 2010, special internal communication means used by unions in Moldova, youth campaigns in Ukraine, writing skills trade union competition in Georgia, flash-mobs in Bulgaria and Ukraine.

On the occasion of the UN Youth Day of 12 August, the participants were able to debate youth policies and actions together with representatives of the social partners. In that discussion the specific attention was devoted to the concerns of youth, particularly, those coming to the labour market about their skills applicability to the needs of workplaces, about quality of education, housing and family building needs, role of youth in social, political and trade union space in Azerbaijan.

The conference was financially supported by the ILO and the AHİK.



## News from the organisations

### Transport workers' strike in Czech Republic on 16 June

The strike held on the whole day 16th June 2011 stopped all railway transport in the Czech Republic and a large part of public transport in some of the big cities, for instance in Prague and Brno.

The strike was supported by a trade union rally held the same day in Prague convened by the CMKOS and the Association of Autonomous Trade Unions. Its participants were not only trade unionists but also representatives of civic initiatives and general public.

In various towns and cities trade unionists from other unions gathered at the places of strike to support their striking colleagues and express their solidarity.

The strike received large support of the public - according to opinion polls around two thirds of people agreed with its aims.

CMKOS would like to thank for solidarity messages and expressions of support they received from the colleagues abroad.

The meeting of the Czech tripartite body - Council of Economic and Social Agreement - was held to discuss again the reforms proposed by the Government.



### Hungarian unions in protests against the government, 16 June

Four Hungarian trade union confederations, (ASZSZ, ESZT, MSZOSZ, SZEF), organized on national level a successful demonstration on 16 June and protested against the amendment of the Labour Code, increasing of exploitation and reduction of incomes.

Trade unions protested against the abolition of the National Council of Reconciliation of Interests (a tripartite body for the negotiations between the social partners and the Government), against changing the pension system without preliminary negotiations with unions and employers' associations. Confederations also protested against the significant reduction of the unemployment benefits and other social supports.

Janos Borsik, President of the ASZSZ, pointed out that this demonstration is not the last one, if Government realises its threats which further damage the workers' situation.



## Demonstration in Warsaw, 30 June

More than 30 thousand unionists from all sectors and regions of „Solidarnosc” took part in the demonstration under the slogan “Your policy – our poverty”, which took place on 30 June in Warsaw. This was one of the largest union rallies in years.

During the demonstration signatures were collected under the citizens' bill on increasing the minimum wage. The demonstration was unconventional, with participating miners' orchestra, majorettes, music platforms and rock concert. Hundreds of leaflets were dropped from a blimp.

Among the guests addressing the gathered unionists was Georgios Dassis, chair of the trade union group in the EESC, and Jozef Niemiec, Deputy Secretary General of the ETUC. They both said the governments use the crisis as a pretext to assault the workers' rights and cut wages and transfer the burden of recovery plans entirely onto the working people.

Piotr Duda, the president of NSZZ “Solidarnosc”, said that despite the fact that we live in a free and democratic country, we are still not free from social pathologies. “Again, the authorities do not want to talk with the unions calling us hooligans, just like in the times of the communist power.” He also appealed to young people to join the movement and support the fight against exploitation, low wages and precarious work contracts.

The protest column arrived to the Prime Minister's Office and handed the petition demanding increase of the minimum wage, temporary reduction of taxes on fuels, transfer of resources to the Labour Fund and broadening the criteria for social aid, as well as suspension and renegotiation of the energy-climate pact and active family policy, including secure employment for the youths.

“For the first time we were hosted by the Prime Minister Donald Tusk and his top advisor minister Michal Boni. They proposed appointing joint task groups, which is a good sign” said Piotr Duda.



## Upcoming events

<b>SEE Economists network meeting</b>	8-9 September, Durras
<b>PERC HTUR network meeting</b>	19-20 September, Sofia
<b>PERC Summer School</b>	21-23 September, Sofia
<b>Challenging IFIs, Eastern Europe meeting</b>	4-5 October, Warsaw
<b>World Day for Decent Work</b>	<b>7 October</b>

## You may be interested



### European Federation of Public Service

EPSU has recently launched a 'public services monitor' to track national, regional and local initiatives to defend public services, prevent privatisation or to bring services back under public management and control. The monitor will be sent by email to registered recipients on a regular basis and stories will also be published on website on <http://www.epsu.org/r/578> ; for more information please contact: European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU)

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