

Final draft resolution: Organising in Commerce

(Draft resolution 2)

Strategic Objective 2: Organising and capacity development

To gain union recognition in the industries where UNI sectors operate and to further facilitate union growth by building the capacity to support organising campaigns worldwide.

UNI Global Union's Strategy for action from Nagasaki to Cape Town sets 5 strategic objectives aimed at growing and strengthening affiliated unions and UNI Global Union to improve the lives of service workers.

- 1 Global and regional companies
- 2 Organising and capacity development
- 3 Jobs with Justice
- 4 Political and regional influence
- 5 UNI as innovative and inclusive organisation

These strategic priorities and their related goals form the basis for the work of UNI Europa Commerce inspired by the UNI commerce strategic plan.

Introduction

The membership is key to union power. It is a precondition to gain legitimacy, respect, credibility and to success. Without enough members, trade unions cannot be recognised as social partners by companies and employers organisations. The highest membership is, the most public authorities may take into account trade union claims and autonomy of action is better ensured.

A trade union organising strategy is a necessity in all countries and in companies to develop union power.

Obstacles to organising members

Precarious work and career development

Membership declines in many countries because of the development of precarious work. The lack of possibility for workers to make plans for future in their job particularly for workers with part-time, short-term contracts or agency workers undermines the involvement of workers for the improvement of working environment. Many young workers consider the commerce sector as an entry to the labour market and career development. But the poor working conditions push them to leave the sector rather quickly.

Yellow or in-house unions

Regrettably certain companies' management have set up or helped to set up fake trade unions to keep out real trade unions and serve their own interests.

Union busting

Independently from their size and origin, certain companies fight against the setting up of unions, in contradiction with the fundamental workers right of association and to collective bargaining.

Certain multinational companies have a respectful attitude towards trade unions in their country of origin but close their eyes when their subsidiaries operate in the wrong way.

Workers representatives, trade unionists are regularly victims of unscrupulous management subjecting them to bullying and harassment like with threats of firing workers, sanctions, denying promotion or even physical assaults.

Opportunities and challenges

Youth and women

The commerce sector employs women in majority and young people. Trade unions should adapt their organising strategies to them and ensure equal opportunity for leadership positions in their organisations.

Image of trade unions

The attractiveness of trade unions depends to a large extent on their representatives' image. It is important that trade union leaders profile corresponds to the workforce.

Best practices

- Romania: organising at Carrefour and Metro by FSC union
- Inditex: global agreement signed with UNI Commerce
- Poland: specific campaign on security workers at IKEA, and at Tesco and Kaufland by Solidarnosc.
- Turkey: organising at Carrefour, Real and Tesco by Tez-Koop-Is and Praktiker by Turk-Koop-is
- Belgium: in retail, trade unions have negotiated and obtained the payment of a "trade union premium" that enables to lighten the financial weight of trade union fees. As a consequence, trade union membership has significantly increased. Employers pay an amount of money that is based on the number of workers to a sectorial social fund. This fund is co-managed by employers and trade unions. Every year, the employer provides workers with a document to request the premium. This document is sent by the worker to the union who pays back the premium.

ACTIONS

UNI Europa Commerce and its Affiliates will :

- Support the setting up of global company alliances and the negotiation of global framework agreements that endorse union access to workers and establish organising opportunities.
- Seek to integrate the work on EWCs into the global work on multinational companies.
- Share any information at their disposal with each other in order to ensure equal footing in decision making.
- Fight precarious work by systematically denouncing the utilisation of unnecessary short-term contracts and agency work in the commerce sector and by negotiating collective agreements that disallow or restrict their use.
- Fight companies that do not respect workers freedom of association and to collective bargaining, and those that set up fake trade unions
- Exchange experiences, communicate on trade union victories, and identify organisers on the ground to be more effective in organising members.
- The special efforts being developed in Central and Eastern Europe by UNI Europa Commerce, e.g. a cooperation with ILO-ITC for the promotion of organising members in new members states and candidate countries in order to build social dialogue / collective bargaining, will be continued.
- Each UNI Europa Commerce affiliated organisation will develop plans to recruit more members as well as plans on how to keep membership. These plans will target in particular women and young workers.