

Final draft resolution: Inclusive labour market

(Draft resolution 5)

Strategic Objective 4: Political and regulatory influence

To change global and regional processes of integration and regulatory frameworks and be a recognised partner in these processes.

To raise employment standards in the services sector

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 UNI Commerce strategic plan.

For a fairer and more inclusive commerce labour market

The commerce sector workforce is diverse and represents a broad range of the European population and employs essentially women, young people and immigrant workers. However, these groups are being disproportionately affected under economic recession. Especially youth workers and older workers are bearing the brunt of the current economic recession. These groups were the first to have been shed during the financial crisis and current unemployment levels for these groups are intolerably high.

UNI Europa Commerce believes that actively implementing social inclusion policies can mitigate the negative consequences the economic climate has on youth and older workers while also giving the European commerce employers a competitive advantage.

Youth unemployment

One in five of all young Europeans are without work, representing more than 5.5 million young people under 25. This is an alarmingly high figure. In some countries, for example Spain, the figures are disturbingly high, where 43 % of all Spanish young people are without work. While the economic crisis and European unemployment have a profound effect on workers lives, the current youth unemployment has devastating effects on a whole generation.

The commerce sector has traditionally been a sector where young people can gain access to the labour market. Young workers represent a highly flexible source of labour for employers and fulfil an important role for the commerce sector employers.

UNI Europa Commerce will strongly resist the trend where young people mainly enter the commerce sector via atypical, highly flexible, insecure and precarious forms of employment (marginal part-time, temporary or fixed term employment etc.). The likelihood that these forms of jobs are stepping-stones to permanent employment is low.

The high youth unemployment places youth workers in a disadvantageous position with regard to securing decent employment: a) The effect of intolerable high youth unemployment coupled with an increase in atypical work contract highlights the need for sustainable inclusive labour market policies targeting youth workers in the commerce sector and b) Certain young people accept or have to accept flexible work organisation patterns. UNI Europa Commerce demands better matching between workers flexibility needs and employers decisions. Workers needs are different according to the moments of life. Working students, young parents and older workers may have different needs that must seriously be taken into account.

The transition from education to work and between jobs is a structural challenge for young people all over the EU. UNI Europa Commerce believes that among other things professional apprenticeships –if correctly paid - have a largely positive impact on young people's access to employment, especially if they enable the direct in-house acquisition of work skills and expertise.

According to research, young people have negative perceptions of the commerce sector. While this is less problematic in the current economic climate in the commerce sector, there is no doubt that the future demographic changes will result in a need for young workers. Therefore employers must address this issue. UNI Europa Commerce fundamentally believes that remuneration and working hours lie at the heart of this negative perception, but also the lack of career opportunities and training.

Collective bargaining and adequate trade union involvement offer the best ways of tackling the issue of high youth unemployment in the commerce sector.

Demands

UNI Europa Commerce calls on the Member States to have ambitious policies on training young people.

UNI Europa Commerce calls for more and better apprenticeships; refers to the positive experiences with the dual system within Vocational Educational and Training (VET) in countries such as Germany, Austria and Denmark where the system is seen as an important part of young people's transition from education to employment

UNI Europa Commerce calls on the Member States to support apprenticeship schemes and to incite companies to provide training opportunities for young people even in times of crisis, and urges the Member States to establish a European system for the certification and recognition of knowledge and skills acquired through apprenticeships and traineeships, which will help to increase young workforce mobility.

UNI Europa Commerce urges employers to use existing social dialogue to cooperate with unions to tailor employment policies for youth workers to make sure they have decent

working conditions and to invest in their training in order to better safeguard a skilled and service oriented commerce work force.

Older workers

The commerce sector in Europe has a significantly younger workforce than other sectors. Older workers are less inclined to remain in the commerce sector. UNI Europa Commerce believes that it is important that the obvious challenges that the demographic development presents Europe with is seen and acted upon as an opportunity to further develop the commerce sector.

Unemployment levels for older workers are significantly higher in the commerce sector and despite European legislation and case law prohibiting age discrimination, older workers were some of the first to have been laid off during the crisis.

Workers are getting older, so are the consumers, and changing lifestyles are reflected in changing consumer demands. Therefore, the commerce sector has no choice but to address the structural problems with a workplace apparently not tailored to older workers. This problem will only grow in the future. Demographic developments, and in particular the ageing of the population, need to be taken further into account.

Older workers are also disproportionately affected by a lack of training and re-skilling to better enable them to remain in the commerce sector. Wage earners aged 50 years and over account for only 3 % of vocational training a year. A glaring mismatch as the need for continuous and lifelong learning is relevant and necessary for all ages. At the same time we know that a higher level of labour skills will be needed in the future – for example with RFID technology. Policies that aim to retain older workers into employments that fit them and focuses on investing in training for older workers should therefore be seen as ways to improve its productivity by raising the quality of work and efficiency as well as offering better service to customers, also thanks to transfer of experience to others.

Best Practices

Collective bargaining and sufficient trade union involvement offer the best ways of tackling the issue of retaining older workers in the commerce sector:

- In the UK B&Q has been a pioneer in this area, and ASDA has introduced policies such as 'grandparent leave' for its employees.
- IKEA, are also targeting mature and older workers to solve recruitment problems
- Denmark: Collective bargaining has created special funds that the companies pay into, to finance training for their workers. Workers now have 2 weeks to undertake training of their own choice per year.
- Belgium: Part-time time credit measures for elder workers with complementary wage payment by public authorities and /or employers allow for careers that last longer but for final years in work to be lighter.

Demands

UNI Europa Commerce urges the social partners to further develop the cooperation within the framework of CSR in order to include older workers that find it difficult to remain in the commerce sector and also for older workers that today find it too difficult to get a job in the sector.

UNI Europa Commerce urges the European Union to faithfully uphold and implement current legislation and case law against age discrimination. The European Union also has to tailor its employment strategy to better accommodate older workers and to a greater extent than today focus resources – for example through the European Social Fund – on training older workers.

Employers need to promote of a culture of forward-looking age management within companies both in terms of young people entering or older people leaving the labour market, and adapting methods to this, essentially using the options of gradual leaving whilst taking account of the arduousness nature of the work performed.

UNI Europa Commerce demands better measures allowing for a combination of retirement and employment and strongly opposes current Member States' focus on extending working age.

ACTIONS

UNI Europa Commerce and its Affiliates will :

- Continue to lobby the European institutions on key legislation with regard to age discrimination.
- Develop and extend best practice among its affiliated organisations with regard to collective agreements that protect and foster young workers and retain older workers in the commerce sector. Further develop a dedicated webpage, where information can be easily disseminated.
- Continue UNI Europa Commerce's cooperation with EuroCommerce with regard to the project under the social dialogue on "Establishing a European Network for anticipating skill needs in the commerce sector.
- Invite EuroCommerce to explore the possibility of a common position on properly paid apprenticeships in the commerce sector.
- Adapt organising of trade union member strategies to empower young and older workers in the defence of their rights and future.