



A project between CFDT union in France and the UGTT union centre in Tunisia has recruited more than 1,000 call centre workers



Building global links in call centres

Call centre professionals are being urged to speak up to secure their jobs in this year's UNI Action Month in call centres that runs through October.

The aim is to spotlight the high level of insecurity faced by workers in the industry and the need for union organisation.

Unions around the world are building the link between well-treated customer service professionals - well trained and qualified - and good service to the customer.

October has become the traditional month for global activities aimed at customer service workers and organised by UNI global union.

The theme this year for Customer Service Organising Month is:

It's YOUR call -

Speak up! Secure your job.

A key aim of this year's action month is to spotlight the high level of insecurity workers face.

The campaign reaches out to both the represented and unrepresented call centre worker - it's a timely call for union involvement.

UNI is encouraging a campaigning presence and a dialogue between unions who represent call centre workers around the world.

These unions work on a daily basis for decent work and health and safety - and tackling high staff turnovers (the so-called "churn rate"), poor working environments and equipment.

We believe that only properly treated customer service professionals - well trained and highly qualified - can provide the best service to the customer.

We are acting globally as unions because customer service professionals face common issues - globally.

Solidarity wins

Pat his job back



Solidarity from his work colleagues won back CWU UK activist Pat Carmody his job in a London-based call centre.

40 gathered to protest his sacking outside the Old Street call centre of Pell & Bales - who work with ethical organisations like Oxfam and Christian Aid.

Pat's "crime" was to speak out in support

of a suspended colleague! The issue even reached the UK Parliament with support from members of both main parties.

"They simply weren't expecting the level of outrage that Pat's sacking triggered," said CWU organising secretary John East. The next target is better pay - a campaign launched with a great Pay Rise Party.

We are talking about young workers, workers with atypical employment contracts and workers working outside traditional boundaries.

We are talking about women and men who often work long and unregulated hours in jobs that can be monotonous and repetitive with few opportunities for promotion.

It's difficult for professionals in call centres to demand alone their rights from the company.

They need the collective support of their colleagues - and they need to know that they have the support of call centre workers around the world.

We are here to help.

its-your-call.org



FOCUS ON FRENCH LANGUAGE CALL CENTRES:

Working to improve conditions

Media attention on the astonishing growth of the call centre industry has focused mainly on the English language and outsource providers in countries like India.

But major French companies like Orange-France Telecom are part of a fast growing French-language offshoring (de-localisation) industry in countries like Tunisia, Morocco and other parts of francophone Africa.

Major call centre operators like Télé-performance, Transcom, Stream and Salommo are emerging - and unions are making their presence felt in helping these new customer service professionals.

In **Tunisia** a project between CFDT union in France and the UGTT union centre in Tunisia has recruited more than 1,000 call centre workers into union membership.

Already cooperation between unions in the two countries has won pay improvements and now the focus is on long working hours (tele-counsellors there can work up to 48 hours a week) and insecure job contracts.

Unions have been able to use France's social label of companies to ensure improvements in their offshore operations.

"People cannot sit answering a phone for eight hours in a row and six days a week. Socially responsible policies must not stop at the borders of western countries," says UNI's Marcus Courtney.

In **Morocco** a call centre worker speaks out to fellow global union ITUC-CSI about conditions in her country.

It's a fast growing industry - there are already 300 call centres in Casablanca.

"The problem is the investors' motives - they want to exploit the flaws in Morocco's labour legislation," says Laila Nassimi (in an interview with the ITUC's Natasha David).

"Young people working in the sector have no experience and are afraid of losing their jobs, so they agree to anything."



UNI's Marcus Courtney and Giedre Lelyte with just some of the campaign material for this year's global Action Month in call centres

SITEL unions protest at job losses

Fighting for jobs in SITEL

Unions in Belgium and other European countries have been protesting against the re-structuring plans of call centre multinational SITEL.

Hundreds of lay-offs are threatened without a negotiated restructuring plan in place for workers.

UNI's Belgian affiliates were part of protest action after Sitel's boss in the USA refused to sign an agreement made between unions and Belgian management in Belgium.

The unions want to head off sackings and talk about working conditions.

They took their case to the Belgian Ministry of Employment.

They are a new, young elite - but it comes at a price.

"We become like machines, robots. Many of us suffer from backache, loss of hearing, depression, migraines and rheumatism because of the air conditioning."

Laila works for Sitel Maroc and helped unionise the first call centre in Morocco. The employer wanted workplace representatives but union elections were organised with a single list and 60% of staff joined the union.

"Labour legislation does not cater for this new type of work. We are trying to make our bosses understand that we need a collective agreement that responds to this new reality."

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