

Opening doors to organising in ISS agreement



Tom Balanoff and Philip Jennings at the SEIU conference in Puerto Rico - venue for the signature of the new UNI-ISS global agreement (Photo: c 2008 Bill Fitzpatrick)

UNI global union and ISS - one of the world's leading providers of facility services - have signed a breakthrough global agreement that opens the door to union organising in all operations. The agreement ensures that workers have the right and opportunity to organise, with union access to employees and assurances the employer will not oppose unionisation. ISS also agrees to recognise unions using the easiest process under national law. Under the agreement (which replaces one signed in 2003) ISS will donate 100,000 euro a year to a jointly managed fund to monitor and raise standards in specific markets.

■ "ISS and UNI have set a new global rights benchmark," said UNI's General Secretary, Philip Jennings. "The concrete commitments of our agreement are a model for other employers to follow if they are serious about their social responsibility."

■ "As one of the big employers in the world - with 440,000 people under the ISS flag and more joining everyday - we want to spearhead the raising of standards and better conditions in our industry globally," said Group CEO Jørgen Lindegaard.

■ "This agreement represents a real opportunity for progress for the many thousands of workers who want to improve their lives through building unions," said Tom Balanoff, President of UNI Property Services global union. (christy.hoffman@uniglobalunion.org)

Revised directive campaign: the EWCreport is downloadable in five languages

Joint declaration in Temporary Work Agency sector

UNI-Europa and Eurociett - social partners in the temporary work agency sector - agreed a joint declaration on a draft directive on working conditions for temporary agency workers. A key clause in the declaration would ensure workers placed in companies by temp agencies are entitled from day one to the basic conditions of the company employees they work alongside. Ten days later EU Ministers agreed to proceed with the directive - including equal payment. Unions welcomed the move but will fight in the Parliament simultaneous moves to ease restrictions on overtime. (bernadette.segol@uniglobalunion.org)

Norwegian pension fund dumps G4S

G4S has been placed on its list of excluded companies by Norwegian pension fund KLP. There are 50 companies altogether on the excluded list for failing to meet KLP's ethical criteria. Violation of employee rights prompted the move and KLP cites UNI's complaint against G4S for breaching OECD guidelines in a number of countries around the world. With 560,000 employees, G4S is the biggest employer listed on the London Stock Exchange and the second largest private employer in the world. (christy.hoffman@uniglobalunion.org)

EWCreport to help campaign

UNI-Europa has published an 8-page EWCreport to help the union campaign to give more power to European Works Councils to shape change. Union federations - including UNI-Europa - and the ETUC are pressing the European Commission, governments and European Parliament to give EWCs more effective rights to information and consultation - in time to influence key decisions that affect workers. More training and more frequent EWC meetings are among the union claims. (Download the EWCreport in English, Spanish, French, German and Swedish from: uni-europa.org)

European Works Councils: a UNI-Europa report

— On the offensive for stronger European Works Councils —

Power for EWCs to shape change

Unions from across Europe have launched a major campaign to support a long overdue revision of the 1994 European Works Councils Directive. The aim is to give EWCs effective rights to information and consultation - in time to affect major corporate decisions that have serious effects on the lives of workers.

Since 1994 Europe has been transformed by corporate restructuring, outsourcing (de-localisation) and ever bigger mergers and acquisitions. All this against a backdrop of a single European market in an increasingly global economy with global supply chains.

In proposing revisions the European Commission acknowledges the important role that EWCs can play in "anticipating and managing change".

The European Trade Union Confederation and the European Union federations - including UNI-Europa - are running a joint campaign aimed at national governments, the Commission and the European Parliament. The target is substantive agreement by the end of this year - in the face of what is expected to be still opposition from the employers' BusinessEurope.

"The issue of change has become ever more important to European workers", says the ETUC. "Substantial changes are needed if EWCs are to play their appropriate role in the ongoing process of European integration."


Efforts to get European employers to commit to speedy negotiations and indicate progress on issues that have remained deadlocked for years failed and unions have put their focus on the political and parliamentary path.

"A revised directive along the lines of our demands would mean more power for workers to shape decisions and to take the necessary steps to protect workers during restructuring processes", says UNI-Europa Secretary Bernadette Segol. "Too often at the moment, EWCs and unions learn of decisions after the event - we need to be pro-active."

Unions want greater access to training and outside experts for EWC members and a clear legal role in the process for unions and the federations.

"We are the insiders. As European union federations we are the only link between EWC members and it would be the first one that unions as such are recognised in European legislation", says Bernadette.

UNI-Europa already plays a key role in coordinating unions and providing support to the 200 EWCs that involve the skills and services sector.



UNI-Europa's conference in Athens called for more union members in EWCs - and highlighted a global dimension

June 2008

It wants to create more networks between European Works Councils in the countries involved - and to ensure that more EWC members are trade unions.

UNI-Europa's conference in Athens last year set increasing union representation on EWCs as a priority and backed the call for a revision of the EWC Directive.

Legal recognition for UNI-Europa and the other federations could also significantly increase the number of EWCs in Europe - allowing Europe to initiate negotiations to establish new EWCs.

It could lead to collective bargaining at a European level. It already happens in some companies - on mobility for example - with a unified policy emerging through EWCs.

"There is a real possibility in the future that EWCs could undertake a collective bargaining role - but we have to make sure that it is with the unions within the EWC," says UNI-Europa's UNI Ian Methuen.

Restructuring, approval and bonus systems could be some of the issues discussed across borders as companies increasingly develop regional (and global) policies.

Jard's not just a European issue.

Effective European networks of unions and EWC members can also provide a strong foundation for global union networks in the growing number of Europe-based companies moving into other continents.

■ See page seven for "going global".

Report



UNI-Europa Secretary Bernadette Ségol and President Frank Bsirske

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Unions getting more pro-active in Europe

Unions are urged to become more pro-active in dealing with a European Union where the proportion of national wealth going to workers is falling, where inequalities are growing and where judges are writing the laws of cross-border labour disputes. "It's not enough to react - we urgently need an agenda and stop reacting piecemeal to what the Commission is doing," UNI-Europa President Frank Bsirske told the regional executive in Istanbul. There were calls to halt competition to bid down corporate tax rates between EU states. (bernadette.segol@uniglobalunion.org)

Quebecor disengaging from Europe

Quebecor - the troubled global print giant - is pulling out of Europe and selling its operations there to the Dutch-based HHBV group. Subject to EU approval, the sale will strengthen HHBV in its strategy to build a pan-European printing platform. An emergency meeting of the Select Committee of the Quebecor European Works Council met on 11 June and UNI Graphical has raised concerns for employees. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

June 15 - about time for justice!

It's about time that security guards get paid overtime. It's about time that cleaners get full-time work and a living wage - and it's about time for decent jobs in property services. Workers in dozens of countries around the world will be taking action to make these demands on 15 June this year. (Go to: internationaljusticeday.org)

PE: US spotlight on KKR

US affiliate SEIU is putting the spotlight on top Private Equity Group KKR whose companies have shed thousands of workers and cut wages. The "No free lunch" drive will alert pension boards and elected officials about KKR's abuse of tax loopholes and will include actions in front of KKR companies - like Toys R Us and First Data. Republican Presidential candidate John McCain will also get a visit - KKR have signed on as one of his major fundraisers. (seiu.org)

Court backs Allianz strikers

Striking Allianz workers in Korea have won a key court battle. The court agreed with the union (ALKU) that the company's imposition of a new performance pay system breached the collective agreement and ruled that sales managers - sacked for supporting the strike - have the right to join a union even though not covered by the agreement. UNI and German affiliate ver.di have made new appeals to Allianz central management to intervene to settle the dispute. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

DHL Express restructuring threatens jobs

Hundreds of jobs at DHL in the US are threatened by the company's decision to abandon its air network there and subcontract the work to UPS. It will mean closing 30% of DHL Express's US infrastructure and up to 10% of its 18,000 staff could lose their jobs. The Teamsters union is evaluating the impact of the agreement with UPS on members. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

Campaign successes at work against HIV/AIDS

There were success stories at a recent meeting of African unions and global unions in Lilongwe, Malawi to review an on-going project backed by LO-Norway. HIV/AIDS infection rates are declining in some countries due to increased awareness, there are more workplace policies and greater collaboration with employers and civil society organisations. The meeting called for more mainstreaming of the issue and urged unions to get pro-active in winning resources and to build the issue into collective agreements. (zakari.koudougou@uniglobalunion.org)

Union rights call to Metro in India

Metro Cash and Carry in India are being urged to respect union rights - and stop local managers pressurising employees to leave their union (UNICOME). Problems have arisen recently at Metro in Hyderabad - with 100 staff walking out -and follow similar problems last year in Bangalore. UNICOME was launched by UNI to give workers greater protection in India's growing retail sector. "We are keen to establish good relations with Metro to see it prosper in India," said UNI Deputy General Secretary Philip Bowyer in a letter to Metro's India CEO. (philip.bowyer@uniglobalunion.org)



UNICOME members
in Hyderabad with
UNIdoc's JSR Prasad

Protests over Zimbabwe arrests

The Zimbabwe graphical workers union condemned the arrest and detention of Zimbabwe Congress of Trade Unions President Lovemeore Matombo and Secretary General Wellington Chibhebhe last month. Their arrest came at a time of growing political tensions and attacks by Zanu PF thugs on opposition supporters. In spite of assurances to African countries the media reports travel obstructions facing Opposition leader Morgan Tsvangirai in the run-off presidential election campaign. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)

UK Foreign Office protest at Zimbabwe sackings

UNI has taken its protest at the sacking of two bank union leaders in Zimbabwe to the UK's Foreign Office. The two were sacked by London-based Standard Chartered bank while carrying out union duties. Bank chairman Mervyn Davies has refused to reinstate in spite of them winning their appeal against dismissal. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

Call to strengthen Turkey's labour laws

Union rights and democracy need to be strengthened in Turkey if it is to be successful in joining the European Union, agreed UNI-Europa's executive in Istanbul. The meeting condemned a tear gas attack by police on May Day marchers in the city and approved a five-point plan to strengthen cooperation with Turkish unions. UNI-Europa is to press the Commissioner for EU enlargement Olly Rehn to raise the issue of labour rights in ongoing negotiations over Turkey's application. (bernadette.segol@uniglobalunion.org)



Turkish unions at the UNI-Europa
Executive meeting in Istanbul

Targeting EPZs in Vietnam

UNI-Asia Pacific and unions in Vietnam are putting the focus on export processing zones. A long running project (backed by LO TCO Sweden) is turning its attention to the two golden triangles of EPZs - Dong Nai province and Binh Duong. A planning meeting highlighted the need for training for union officials - to include organising, negotiating skills, grievance handling and communication skills - as overseas companies and WTO membership transform the Vietnamese economy. (uni-asiapacific@uniglobalunion.org)

Claim to cover rising food and petrol prices

Rising food and petrol prices are behind a campaign launched by South African affiliate SATAWU for double digit pay increases (10%-12%) in sectors like security and cleaning. Marches were held in May and the union alerted the media to the vulnerability of their low paid members to food and transport price increases. The majority of members are working poor - including casual, temporary and brokered workers. (uni-africa@uniglobalunion.org)



Lively discussion at UNI's Organising Seminar in Nyon

Ursula Wynhoven of UN Global Compact meets UNI staff



UNI seminar to build organising

UNI's first-ever global Organising Seminar was held in Nyon in May over three days. With the help of Michael Crosby, SEIU Europe, the seminar looked at new ways to reach out to new workers. "Organising has to be the bedrock of the work of global unions like UNI," says UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings. Those attending came from unions in Germany, Ireland, South Africa. (gabrielle.fulton@uniglobalunion.org)

Tough round in German commerce

Germany's commerce employers' associations are conducting what seems to be a collective agreement busting campaign with demands for major concessions from ver.di. In spite of a resilient German economy the employers want to scrap payments for working unsocial hours. This would hit the earnings of many workers and would come in the wake of longer opening hours. (jan.furstenborg@uniglobalunion.org)

Relacom dumps wages

Nordic telecom unions have condemned attempts at wage dumping and exploiting low paid foreign workers by Relacom. The company is being pressed to observe terms of collective agreements in the Nordic countries. Encouraged by recent European Court of Justice rulings, employers are expected to step up moves to circumvent negotiated rates by importing workers or contractors from lower-wage countries. Relacom sacked around 100 workers and brought in technicians from Poland who work in Sweden outside the collective agreement. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

UNI meets Global Compact in Nyon

UNI Nyon hosted a visit from Ursula Wynhoven of UN Global Compact to brief staff on a new initiative to boost labour principles. A new working group aims to raise the profile of labour principles among Global Compact companies and networks by developing tools and increasing the exchange of information. Unions, employers, the ILO and Global Compact staff met in Geneva to form the alliance and agree a work plan. Many of UNI's global agreements with multinationals already build in reference to the Global Compact and all embrace the ILO's core labour standards. (gabrielle.fulton@uniglobalunion.org)

Leicester recognition at Donnelley

Unite the union members have gained a union recognition agreement with RR Donnelley in Leicester UK. About 100 people work at the site and a voluntary agreement was signed after membership density reached two thirds of the workforce. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

Health care talks open at AT&T Mobility

Bargaining got underway on 3 June over the national health care plan covering more than 40,000 workers at AT&T Mobility, USA. The settlement - negotiated in 2004 - expires on 30 June. "CWA is determined to reach a fair agreement on health care that reflects the company's profitability in what is the fastest-growing segment of the business," said Executive Vice President Jeff Rechenbach. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

World summit on Health & Safety for Korea

About 4,000 industry leaders, policy-makers and experts from over 100 countries are to gather in Seoul later this month for the triennial World Congress on Health and Safety at Work. It's the largest international event of its kind. The Congress will also host a high-level Health and Safety Summit involving 50 decision-makers from around the world, including government ministers, multinational CEOs, senior health and safety and social security experts, and representatives of employers and workers. (ilo.org)

Union rights call in RR Donnelley

The UNI@Donnelley Global Working Group has called on the world's biggest printers to stop union busting and respect labour rights wherever it operates around the world. At its meeting in Chicago on 15 May the working group condemned anti-union policies at Donnelley's Pontiac, Illinois facility where workers have been campaigning for a union and a collective agreement in the face of harassment. Unions delivered a letter to Donnelley head offices in Chicago urging global dialogue.

(adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org).



Pressing in Chicago for global dialogue with RR Donnelley

Collective agreement demand for bank IT workers

UNI Finance has called for collective agreement coverage for 6,000 employees affected by merger negotiations between the owners of Sparkassen Informatik and FinanzIT. Ver.di has criticised the removal of Sparkassen's IT workers from the bank's collective agreement.

(oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

New Quebecor contract in USA

Members of five unions - part of the Graphic Communications Conference-International Brotherhood of Teamsters - approved new contracts covering 650 people at Quebecor's Mt Morris facility USA. It took 26 months of bargaining - complicated at the end by Quebecor's move into protected bankruptcy in North America. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)

E-Kart protest in Istanbul

UNI-Europa Executive took its protest at a serious violation of rights at graphical company E-Kart on to the streets of Istanbul. For two years E-Kart has been working to keep out Graphical affiliate Basin-IS and avoid a collective agreement - including firing two union members and forcing workers to leave the union. All this in spite of a ruling from Turkey's Supreme Court, the Eczacibasi Group's signature of the Global Compact and a labour standards code at German-based joint venture partner G&D. (adriana.rosenzvaig@uniglobalunion.org)



Vocal protest from Basin-IS members outside E-Kart offices in Istanbul

Agreement reached at TNT

ABVAKABO FNV and other unions in the Netherlands have reached an agreement in principle with TNT after difficult negotiations. Unions rejected company plans for job and conditions cuts and a wage freeze. The deal provides for a 3% pay rise, heading off industrial action. Findings from a study group on plans to save costs are awaited. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)

Fighting for collective bargaining in Australia

Sub-contractors at Silver Stream - one of three companies providing field workforce services at operator Telstra in Australia - are seeking the go ahead to bargain collectively. Under old Howard laws they need permission from the Competition Commission as sub contractors - and are being opposed by Silver Stream. In spite of a 97% increase in profits the company says negotiating collectively with sub-contractors would be "devastating"! Affiliate CEPU suggests they settle for less profit. (neil.anderson@uniglobalunion.org)



SDA 100th birthday celebrations in Australia. Inset: SDA's Joe de Bruyn

SDA celebrates 100 years

On 14 May Australian commerce affiliate SDA celebrated its 100th birthday. The occasion was celebrated by a centenary dinner, attended by more than 400 union leaders, Labor Party politicians, SDA officials and rank and file members. The Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association arose out of the demand of retail workers in the 1800s for laws to enforce early closing of retail stores and to limit the working hours of shop assistants. (sda.org.au)

Caribbean women highly visible in UNI-Americas Women

No fewer than 13 union women from eight Caribbean nations attended the recent meeting of UNI-Americas Women - the biggest participation ever. Denise Wilson, BCPOU Bahamas and Denise Britton, BIGWU Trinidad and Tobago were elected to the Women's Regional Committee and Minerva Magdaleno, UNASED Dominican Republic continues on the UNI-Americas Executive Committee. UNI-Americas has a Caribbean Support Centre in Trinidad and Tobago. (joanne.defreitas@bigwu.org)

Danske unions discuss cross-cultural cooperation

Employee reps from Danske Bank in Norway, Finland, Sweden, Ireland, Northern Ireland and Denmark joined a seminar of Danske unions in Denmark on 14-16 May. Cross-cultural cooperation and cultural differences within the group were discussed as well as the new European Works Council agreement. (oliver.roethig@uniglobalunion.org)

CEP members accept Bell offer

5,000 craft and services employees working for Bell Canada in Ontario and Québec have backed a pay deal with Bell Canada. It's a five-year collective agreement ensuring job security - important with the possibility of a sale - and also includes wage increases and holiday improvements. The CEP has 45,000 members in the telecom sector in Canada. (cep.ca)



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Global unions for global industries

E-Kart protest in Istanbul



Right: UNI General Secretary Philip Jennings and UNI Graphical President Michel Muller lead UNI-Europa and Basin-IS members in a call for union rights at E-Kart in Istanbul

Above: a four man deputation met a management representative



In May UNI-Europa Executive met in Istanbul, Turkey for the first time. Photo left: farewell to UNI Women's Officer Monique Marti and UNI-Europa Women's Ilona Schulz-Müller and Mercedes Rodriguez. With them are Europa President Frank Bsirske and Secretary Bernadette Ségol. Photo right: Turkish unions at the Executive meeting.



Organising on the agenda in Nyon

Unions from Europe and Africa at the first UNI global organising seminar - held at UNI head offices in Nyon, Switzerland