

BRIEFING NOTE ON RESPECT FOR TRADE UNION HUMAN RIGHTS IN EUROPE

WHAT ARE HUMAN RIGHTS?

Human rights are rights inherent to all human beings, whatever nationality, place of residence, sex, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, language, or any other status. We are all equally entitled to enjoy these rights without discrimination. These rights are universal, indivisible and inalienable.

WHY PROTECT TRADE UNION RIGHTS?

Trade union rights are human rights.

Trade union rights comprise the freedom of association, the right to organise and collective bargaining and the right to collective action including the right to strike. Trade union rights are fundamental rights of individual workers and trade unions. Democratic societies respect, protect and fulfil those rights.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO DEMOCRACY AND ARE A BUILDING BLOCK OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

It is essential to democracy that working people can stand up for their rights, protect themselves against abuses and infringements, make their voices heard and try to achieve better working lives.

It is essential that trade unions are enabled to ensure the achievement of better working conditions and social progress of our societies. Workers must be protected when they organise seek to bargain collectively and when they conduct collective action when they consider this necessary.

Social dialogue at national and European level, and constructive relations between employers and trade unions, including working together, information, consultation and bargaining, are a crucial building block of the European Union.

Trade union rights are not only guaranteed through national Constitutions but also the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, the (Revised) European Social Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and ILO Conventions.

TRADE UNION RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS

History teaches us that attacks on democracy often begin with attacks on trade union rights. In totalitarian and undemocratic regimes trade union rights are feared and oppressed, and it is a democratic achievement that trade union rights are guaranteed, alongside the right to free speech and a free press.

DECENT WORK THANKS TO TRADE UNIONS

In the past, and until today, trade unions contributed to social and political progress and to the development of the social models of Europe.

Most of the achievements of trade union action in the past are today taken for granted. But workers and trade unionist fought hard to achieve social rights such as the freedom of association, the right to collective bargaining and the right to collective action, protection of health and safety, decent working conditions, as well as information, consultation and participation rights.

The limitation of the working hours, first of children and then the entire workforce, to 12, 10, 8 hours a day have been the first major achievements of trade unions in the industrial era end of the 19th, beginning of the 20th century.

Trade unions pressured governments for safeguards against the risks of work and to ensure social security, such as paid annual leave, sick payment, maternity and parental leave unemployment insurance, and pensions.

THREATS TO TRADE UNION RIGHTS?

Today trade union rights are under attack throughout the world including in the EU. Some of these attacks come from EU institutions when they actively undermine the proper observance of International (ILO) Labour Conventions and put respect for trade union rights at risk. In other cases, the attacks come from the employer's side or from governments.

Human rights exist for us all. It is clear that their mere existence is not enough to put an end to human rights violations. It is through the commitment to human rights that improvements can be achieved.

The Members of the European Parliament play a central role in promoting respect for human rights in Europe. We are asking you to confirm your support by signing the pledge.

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