



# *inform* **contact**

## **NEWS FROM THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS**

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### **GCTU COMMISSION CONSIDERS SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION IN REGION'S COUNTRIES**

The GCTU Commission on the protection of workers' socio-economic interests and on legal issues gathered for a regular session in Moscow 22 March 2019. Attending the meeting were members of the Commission, representatives of national trade union centres, sectoral Trade Union Internationals, GCTU staff members, and guests.

GCTU Deputy General Secretary, Natalia Podshibyakina, made a presentation on "The socio-economic situation in the New Independent States in the context of current global challenges." The report pointed to the major challenges of global development, including such as political and economic instability,

growing competition, the emergence of new markets, the introduction of innovative and digital technologies. In this connection the speaker dwelt on the role and place of trade unions in today's processes of economic development.

Participants considered also the draft model law "On the Framework Labour Code for the CIS Member States" presented by the GCTU Legal Department, and decided that the work on the document needed further development and refinement.

### **ARMENIA: CTUA INSISTING ON FULL RESTORATION OF STATE LABOUR INSPECTORATE**

In an interview with the newspaper "Irates" 31 January 2019,

President of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Armenia (CTUA) Eduard Tumasian outlined the position of the trade union centre on the acute problem of the State Labour Inspectorate.

Until 2013, the State Labour Inspectorate existed as a separate structure within the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs that exercised state control and supervision over the compliance with labour legislation, labour law regulations and collective bargaining provisions.

In 2013, the Government decided to reorganise it into an inspection authority for health and labour within the Ministry of Health Care. The result was that it lost a number of important functions in the sphere of supervising occupational health and safety, which came into conflict with ILO Convention No. 81

Thus, the newly created inspection body deals exclusively with cases when workers' health is under direct threat. Meantime, the functions of control over the working day schedule, the length of work hours, overtime etc. cannot be fully implemented because the powers of the supervising body are limited.

The CTUA was among the first to point to the need of full restoration

of the State Labour Inspectorate to its functions. The unions developed, and submitted to the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, a document reflecting their opinion on the Law on Inspection Bodies. The Confederation proposed that the government set up a single inspection body enjoying the powers of state control and supervision that the State Labour Inspectorate was vested with before 2013.

### **BELARUS: SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND TRIPARTISM ON AGENDA**

The Federation of Trade Unions of Belarus (FPB) took part in a conference organised 27 February 2019 in Minsk by the ILO and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection.

The discussion on "Tripartism and social dialogue in the world of work" involved representatives of the ILO, the government, trade unions, employers, academia, and the business community.

Participants discussed the present and prospective role of social partnership in solving problems related to the use of atypical employment, protection of workers' rights in enterprises of transnational corporations, new requirements of employers for personnel, etc.

## **BELARUS: WOMEN MOST VULNERABLE LABOUR MARKET CATEGORY**

In 2018, the international public association “Gender Perspectives” conducted a sociological survey of the problem of inequality in labour relations in Belarus.

The study covered almost 1,300 respondents from different regions of the country, representing economically active population from 16 to 63 years of age, including employed and unemployed men.

The findings revealed that 85 per cent of Belarusians had been exposed to discrimination in the labour market. Most women were discriminated against because of their family responsibilities and motherhood, while men more often faced age discrimination.

The most vulnerable groups are married and unmarried women under 35 years without children, and women with children under 10 years old or on parental leave. Most often, discrimination is practiced against job-seekers (almost 70 per cent Belarusians).

What concerns infringement of rights at work, 64 per cent of

respondents, especially young people, said they had suffered discrimination because of their age.

Some respondents admitted that they did not know where to turn for help and what they should do. Some refer to the fear of impairing their relations with the bosses; others want to keep their jobs. In fact, both factors create barriers to fighting discrimination.

A most common way to react to the infringement of rights is resignation on the initiative of the employee. This is done by almost a third of those who respond to a discriminative situation, and it is women who quit their jobs more often for reasons of right infringement.

## **KYRGYZSTAN: COOPERATING WITH ILO FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

A trilateral conference dedicated to the Centenary of the International Labour Organisation and the World Day of Social Justice was held in the capital of Kyrgyzstan, Bishkek, with the involvement of the ILO, the Parliament, the Government, the Federation of Trade Unions, and the Employers’ Association of Kyrgyzstan.

The Conference, held on the initiative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Development with the support of the ILO, took place 20 February 2019, on the World Day of Social Justice established by the UN General Assembly in 2007. This day is called upon to promote the eradication of poverty, the provision of men and women with decent jobs and wages, the achievement of gender equality and social well-being, and the establishment of social justice for all.

The motto of this year's World Day was "Peace and Development: Activities for Social Justice". One item on the Conference agenda was the presentation of the report of the Global Commission on the Future of the World of Work established by the ILO in 2017. Conference also considered issues of cooperation between Kyrgyzstan and the ILO.

### **KYRGYZSTAN: KFTU INSISTS ON RESTORING LABOUR PROTECTION RIGHTS**

The Kyrgyzstan Federation of Trade Unions (KFTU) sent an open message to the President, the Parliament Speaker, and the Prime Minister of the country.

The message expresses concern over the fact, as a result of the legislation reform, the new Code of Administrative Offenses of the Kyrgyz Republic has virtually lost all provisions concerning the employer's responsibility for violating labour laws and social protection provisions, such as:

- unjustified refusal to hire a job-seeker;
- unreasonable dismissal of an employee;
- late payment of wages, allowances and other social benefits;
- violation of labour protection laws and safety regulations;
- violation of the labour rights of disabled persons.

An analysis carried out by trade unions shows that such violations of workers' labour rights are most common in the informal sector of the economy.

The exclusion from legislation of the above norms also affects the rights of trade unions, limiting their powers in protecting employees' social and labour rights.

The KFTU strongly insists on the restoration of standards that protect labour rights and provide for the administrative responsibility of the employer for violating labour laws.

## **MOLDOVA: TRAINING PRIORITY FOR TRADE UNIONS**

In 2018, the National Confederation of Trade Unions of Moldova (CNSM) and its affiliates conducted 89 training courses at the CNSM Institute of Labour involving over 2,700 trade union activists.

The figures were made public at a meeting of the CNSM Council of Education as it was getting acquainted with the performance of the Labour Institute in trade union training and research in 2018, with a special emphasis being made on the educational project “Trade Union School of Moldova. 7<sup>th</sup> Graduation Year”

In 2019, the education activities of the country’s trade unions will focus on the following three strategic areas: motivation of trade union membership, efficiency of collective bargaining, and trade union organising.

This year’s recruitment for the Trade Union School of Moldova will include 34 students from 12 national sectoral trade unions. They will undergo training in the evening and on weekends in areas such as trade union management, social dialogue, labour law, socio-economic policy, trade union solidarity, gender equality, project management, communications, entrepreneurship, and finance.

CNSM President Oleg Budza believes the project will contribute to the strengthening of primary trade union organisations.

## **MOLDOVA: UNION CONTRIBUTION TO SPORTS**

The National Olympic and Sports Committee awarded the CNSM a Diploma for promoting the Olympic movement in the Republic.

CNSM-affiliated national sectoral trade unions organise annually athletic sports events for union members in various sectors of the national economy. Once in two years, the CNSM holds a major national sports event known as *Spartakiad*. The latest of them, held from 21-22 September 2018, involved more than 600 workers from a variety of industries. Participants competed in volleyball, mini-football, table tennis, checkers, chess, the Olympic relay, tug-of-war (rope pulling) and the Olympic race at 1000 metres.

## **RUSSIA: FNPR TO CONVENE CONGRESS**

At its meeting 12 February 2019, the General Council of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR) announced the de-

cision to convene the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Federation from 20-22 May 2019 in Moscow, with the representation quota being one delegate from every 50 thousand trade unionists.

The Congress agenda will include, among other things, the activity report on the implementation of decisions taken by the previous, 9th Congress, the adoption of a Programme of Action and resolutions, and the election of governing and auditing bodies.

The General Council stressed that in the course of the forthcoming report-election campaign special attention should be devoted to finding solutions to organising, financial and personnel problems, building up the unity of actions by the country's trade unions, and the further strengthening their role as organisations protecting workers' social and economic interests.

The decision to call the 10<sup>th</sup> Congress had been initiated by the FNPR Executive Committee that had met in Moscow two weeks earlier. The meeting also declared 2019 the Year of the Centenary of the Academy of Labour and Social Relations (the higher school of Russia's trade union movement) and the Year of Trade Union Education.

## **RUSSIA: FNPR & MPS DEVELOP DRAFT LAW**

Participants in a joint meeting of the inter-factional working group "Solidarity" of the State Duma and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR) considered the draft Federal Law on Amendments to the Labour Code of the Russian Federation.

The document has been developed by the legislators with the involvement of FNPR to ensure the implementation of the constitutional guarantee of work remuneration not lower than the minimum wage.

According to the regulations, the draft law must be discussed by the Russian Tripartite Commission for the Regulation of Social and Labour Relations. The bill has been sent to the Government for consideration and formal response. The MPs who make up the inter-factional working group have already taken a consolidated stand to support the draft Federal Law.

## **RUSSIA: UNIONS FOR HIGHER MINIMUM WAGE**

FNPR President Mikhail Shmakov believes the Labour Code needs

amendments providing clear-cut definitions which allowances should be viewed as part of the minimum wage and which as additional payments.

He reminded of the Constitutional Court decision saying that all incentive and compensation allowances for special work and living conditions should be payable in excess of the minimum wage. The trial that produced this decision had been initiated by trade unions.

The next step is to make appropriate amendments to the Labour Code. The FNPR leader stressed the unions will continue insisting that the Government develop and adopt such amendments.

### **RUSSIA'S PRESIDENT MEETS WITH FNPR LEADER**

President of Russia Vladimir Putin held a working meeting 20 February 2019 with FNPR Leader Mikhail Shmakov. Among other things, they discussed the indexation of incentive payments and compensations for pensioners.

Both sides agreed that only a steady, progressive development of the economy could provide better opportunities for a more effec-

tive solution of social problems and that all compensatory and incentive sums paid to pensioners should be viewed as supplementary to the pension they receive. In accordance with the decision of the Constitutional Court taken at the end of 2017, the aim of these payments is to raise the pension above the subsistence minimum, rather than bring it up to equal the subsistence minimum.

Mikhail Shmakov informed the President that the trade unions had not yet settled their dispute on the issue with the Government. The latter persists that the wage rate can be lower than the current minimum pay, but it should be raised up to the minimum wage level through the payment of various allowances. The FNPR leader believes this opinion to run completely contrary to the Constitutional Court ruling, and to common sense.

The President said that he would give the relevant instructions to the Government.

### **RUSSIA: FNPR INSISTS ON REFERENDUM**

At its meeting 12 February 2019, the FNPR Executive Committee issued a statement concerning the

initiative on the forming of individual pension capital. The FNPR rejects flatly the principles of its formation proposed by the Central Bank and the Ministry of Finance of Russia.

The Federation advocates consistently for an effective pension reform that would improve the quality of pension provision and build a long-term mechanism for old-age insurance understandable for ordinary citizens.

The building of such a mechanism has been agreed by the social partners in 2012 as they adopted the Strategy for the Development of the Pension System until 2030. The unions believe that the contributory component should be formed solely on a voluntary basis, provided the employee applies personally for participation in the project.

The FNPR believes that setting up voluntary pension systems must encourage:

- the employee's being interested in forming an individual system of protection in old age;
- steady growth of the employees' salaries;
- development of new proposals by insurers and banks concerning voluntary pension insurance for different categories of employees.

The artificial differentiation of employees according to workplace and income does not contribute either to the improvement of employees' protection or to the efficiency of the pension system.

The FNPR demands that a national referendum be conducted on the proposals for the formulation of individual pension capital.

### **UZBEKISTAN: COLLECTIVE AGREEMENTS AS GUARANTEE OF WORKERS INTERESTS**

Work collectives of industrial enterprises, organisations and institutions of Uzbekistan are actively involved both in the collective bargaining campaign, and in the assessment of the implementation of collective agreements signed.

In accordance with the country's legislation, collective bargaining is carried out at four levels: national, industrial, territorial and local.

The main document produced as a result of the national collective bargaining campaign is the General Agreement between the Government, the Federation of Trade Unions and the Chamber of Commerce on Social and Economic Issues.



Based on the General Agreement, industrial, territorial and workplace collective agreements have been concluded. At present, the country has more than 150 thousand collective agreements signed at industrial enterprises and organisations, which embraces about 99 per cent of legal entities employing the labour of trade union members.

### **UZBEKISTAN: TRANSPORT WORKERS' UNION EXPANDING FRATERNAL COOPERATION**

The Republican Union of Transport, Road and Infrastructure Construction, and Building Workers embracing over four thousand enterprises with a total membership of 435 thousand has expanded significantly its international activities over the past two years.

Mutual cooperation memorandums have been signed with related sectoral trade unions of Russia, Belarus, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. There are also plans to sign similar memorandums with Azerbaijan, Armenia and Kazakhstan, and conclude agreements with respective Industrial Trade Union Internationals. For example, in April 2018, a Memorandum was signed with the International Federation of

Transport and Road Maintenance Workers' Unions in Moscow.

### **UKRAINE: FPU & ILO TO ENHANCE EFFECTIVENESS OF COOPERATION**

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of January, 2019, President of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) Grigory Osovyi had a working meeting with the National Coordinator of the International Labour Office in Ukraine Sergey Savchuk.

The FPU leader informed the ILO representative of the work being done by the unions to raise the efficiency of social and economic protection of workers' rights and interests. The key task of trade unions is to win wage increases for workers, and ensure timely and full payment of wages and settlement of outstanding wage arrears.

The ILO is also dealing with these problems. A major section of the new project "Inclusive labour market for jobs in Ukraine", initiated by the ILO, is aiming to get the country's work remuneration system reformed. The ILO will support the initiative by trade unions of Ukraine to set up a guarantee institution to secure the payment of wages to employees of bankrupt enterprises. This will involve the development and implementation of an appropriate draft law.

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THE GENERAL CONFEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS, GCTU, IS AN INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION ORGANISATION THAT WAS FOUNDED AT ITS FIRST CONGRESS ON 16 APRIL 1992.

ITS CONSTITUTION, WHICH WAS APPROVED BY THE FIRST CONGRESS, WAS AMENDED AND SUPPLEMENTED BY THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 22 SEPTEMBER 1993, THE THIRD CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 18 SEPTEMBER 1997, AND THE FIFTH (EXTRAORDINARY) CONGRESS OF THE GCTU 26 MARCH 2004.

THE BASIC OBJECTIVES OF THE GCTU ARE:

- CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' ACTIVITIES ON THE PROTECTION OF SOCIAL RIGHTS OF WORKERS, STUDENTS AND PENSIONERS;
  - ASSISTANCE IN THEIR PROTECTION OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS AND GUARANTEES;
- AND
- ORGANISING TRADE UNION SOLIDARITY AND CO-ORDINATION OF ITS AFFILIATES' INTERNATIONAL POLICIES.

THE GCTU BUILDS ITS ACTIVITIES IN CONFORMITY WITH THE UNIVERSALLY RECOGNISED STANDARDS OF INTERNATIONAL LAW, WITH FULL RESPECT FOR ITS AFFILIATES' COMPLETE INDEPENDENCE AND THE EQUALITY OF THEIR RIGHTS AND DUTIES.

THE GCTU AFFILIATES NATIONAL TRADE UNION CENTRES OF ARMENIA, AZERBAIJAN, BELARUS, GEORGIA, KAZAKHSTAN, KYRGYZSTAN, MOLDOVA, RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN AND UKRAINE, AND ALSO 28 INDUSTRIAL TRADE UNION INTERNATIONALS.

THE GCTU IS READY TO CO-OPERATE WITH ANY OTHER NATIONAL TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS, IRRESPECTIVE OF THEIR AFFILIATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS.

THE CONFEDERATION ENJOYS OBSERVER STATUS WITH THE CIS AND EURASEC INTER-PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLIES, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF STATE, THE CIS COUNCIL OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT, THE CIS INTERSTATE ECONOMIC COMMITTEE, ETC.

INTERNATIONALLY, IT IS IN CONSULTATIVE RELATIONS WITH THE ILO , THE UN DPI AND THE ECOSOC.

THE GCTU SUPREME BODIES ARE THE CONGRESS, CONVENED EVERY FIVE YEARS, AND, IN THE INTERVALS BETWEEN THE CONGRESSES, THE COUNCIL AND THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.

CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES IS EXERCISED BY THE GCTU AUDITING COMMISSION.

PRESIDENT OF THE GCTU IS MIKHAIL SHMAKOV,  
GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE GCTU IS VLADIMIR SCHERBAKOV

## DEAR READERS

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