

ENSU Trade Union Newsletter

May-June 2024

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[ENSU public media policy](#)

In this issue



From the exhibition of children's paintings, on display in Kharkiv metro stations from World Children's Day (November 20)

Welcome to the May-June 2024 issue of ENSU's trade union newsletter.

We feature the background to the humiliating 'success' of the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Russia in obtaining, by the narrowest possible margin, a seat on the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation.

Updates on important worker and community struggles in Ukraine include an informative article on how women are undertaking voluntary military training, some with an eye to joining the army.

A statement by Social Movement (*Sotsialnyi Rukh*) scores the viewpoint of Daryna Marchak (First Deputy Minister of Social Policy) that to escape poverty, Ukrainians just need to work longer.

In our section on solidarity, we highlight the close ties between Norway's trade union confederation (LO) and its Ukrainian sister organisations and the pledges that the Ukrainian solidarity movement in England, Wales and Scotland is asking candidates in the forthcoming UK election to sign.

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Editorial

After EU elections: The struggle for a Ukrainian victory and for social justice must go hand in hand

The results of the June 9 elections to the European parliament give rise to different analyses that the trade union movement needs to discuss seriously. We see a surge of the far right in the core countries of the European Union (EU), along with an advance for the mainstream right across the whole EU.

The social-democratic vote recedes slightly but holds (with the important exception of Germany). The same is true of the vote to its left. But there is a decline of the green parties, which have at times been allies of the left on important issues. The liberals have suffered the most, overtaken by the right and extreme right, most dramatically in France.

The tide is clearly right-wing, conservative in social policies and backward in labour rights, democratic rights and environment. The result has already produced the first earthquakes. In France Macron's calling of early elections has triggered the rebirth of a popular front of left forces; in Spain the third deputy prime minister Yolanda Díaz has resigned as leader of left coalition Sumar.

Esther Lynch, general secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), pointed out before the elections that "the leaders of the extreme right ... offer no solutions to low wages, long hours or poor working conditions. Instead, they focus on divisive rhetoric and fear, which distract from the need for urgent social justice, affordable housing, fair wages and better working conditions." She concluded: "Trade unions will not be fooled or intimidated."

Our tasks

How should the trade union movement then react to the results of June 9? How should these results influence our solidarity with Ukraine's workers and their organisations?

Well, it is time to move from words to deeds. Because if we don't act, our economic and financial overlords—the warring multinational corporations and the states that back them—will increasingly look to authoritarian, anti-democratic "solutions" like those offered by Milei in Argentina. Along that path the organised working class, together with the millions of poor people that depends on it, loses most.

Let's never forget that these authoritarian "solutions" of the far right in government have in Putin's Russia a real champion. As in Russia the corrupt merchants of hate need to tame all independent trade union power as first step in helping their

capitalists regain the upper hand in the global war for markets and resources (including cheap and docile labour).

However, the threat to labour and Ukraine doesn't end here, nor in the influence the policies of the far right are already having on the mainstream conservative right and the liberal "centre" (as in their consensus for a fortress Europe hostile to refugees). Nor in what could happen if Trump wins November's US presidential election and strikes a deal to dismember Ukraine with Putin.

Even Ukraine's just defensive war, which enjoys broad majority support among the peoples of Europe, is presented by the mainstream right as an argument for "social adjustment"—austerity.

Winning the battle for hearts and minds

It is here that the organised labour movement must now go on the offensive. It must show that the defence of Ukraine, including desperately needed military aid, *does not mean that social expenditure has to be sacrificed to finance military budgets*. Here's how.

Firstly, countries can simply send unused weaponry to Ukraine, [as Irish member of parliament Cathal Berry proposed in 2022](#), and [as Denmark is doing with 19 F-16 jets](#). [MPs in solidarity with Ukraine in the British parliament have also proposed](#) that military equipment marked for replacement be donated to Ukraine instead of sold off.

Secondly, [as the declaration of the trade unionists and social activists of Kryvyi Rih makes clear](#), the governments of the countries backing Ukraine have a policy choice: they can "stop weapon exports to third countries [like Israel for its war on Gaza or Saudi Arabia for its war in Yemen] and prioritise the supply of arms and ammunition necessary right now for defence to Ukraine".

Thirdly, if there truly is no option but to increase defence budgets to help Ukraine expel the Russian invader, they can be funded by increased taxation of those who can afford it. That tax income, maybe in the form of a special surcharge on the richest, could be used to directly fund that expenditure or to pay off any increased debt incurred to finance it.

If the trade union movement does not aggressively expose the false argument that "more guns mean less butter" it will leave working people vulnerable to the blackmailing arguments of friends and appeasers of Putin and of the false "friends of Ukraine". This last group is most anxious to exploit the Russian invasion to remilitarise Europe, turn the war into lucrative business for high finance and arms dealers, and lock in the NATO alliance as "indispensable" protection for democratic rights.

The trade union movement has three, indissolubly linked, priorities: defence of Ukraine and its workers, who suffer on the frontline and in their neighbourhoods

and cities; defence of working-class interests against Ukraine's oligarchs; and defence of the working conditions and social rights of all working people.

The [prompt reaction of France's interunion \(*Intersyndicale*\) alliance](#) to the threat of a far-right victory in the legislative elections called by Macron, which follows on its previous [declaration of solidarity with Ukraine's workers and unions](#), shows how organised labour should combine its responsibilities to working people at home and abroad.

We trade unionists must speak out against Russia's criminal war, as our Ukrainian sisters and brothers are urging us to do: if it succeeds, the rights of the working people of Ukraine will be destroyed, as those who survive under Russian occupation in the occupied territories can painfully testify.

But we also cannot stay silent about Zelensky's anti-labour policies, that replace worker protection with deregulation and support the interests of oligarchs old and new. We must try to unite all aspects of the liberating struggle Ukraine is waging and on the outcome of which the future of Europe also depends.

Is it democracy to accept the invasion and dismemberment of a sovereign country by an imperialist neighbour? Is it democracy to accept that a "trade union" like the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), operating on the back of war criminal Putin's invasion, supplants the real Ukrainian trade unions in the occupied territories, participates in the repression and justifies Putin?

The result of the elections for the worker representatives on the Governing Board of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) should give us hope. For the first time in the history of the ILO, a union representative proposed, from the Russian FNPR, was almost not elected. A near majority of delegates, North and South, just didn't want Putin's man (see full coverage on pages 5 to 13).

Democracy is in danger all over Europe. The greatest of these would be Putin's victory. We trade unionists cannot stand by, watch this corpse walk past our door and pretend it doesn't matter. The rights of millions are at stake. We must react. And there is still time.

Alfons Bech

ENSU trade union coordinator

Support the Kryvyi Rih Appeal!

***To foreign politicians:
Justice for Ukrainian workers!***

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The election to the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation and the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia

International Labour Organisation: a slap in the face for Russia among trade unionists

Source: Le Temps, Geneva

By Frédéric Koller

(June 11, 2024) Moscow came within two votes of being humiliated. On Monday [June 10], the Russian candidate for the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) on behalf of the trade unions received 65 votes out of the 126 votes cast. He needed 64 to be elected. When the result was announced, the room erupted in cheers. It was a shock. For the first time in the history of the organisation, a candidate could have been eliminated. The number of candidates, by prior agreement, corresponds to the number of positions to be filled. They are usually elected by a hundred or so votes or unopposed in a secret ballot.

“I don't know what we would have done,” explains Luca Cirigliano, a member of the electoral college representing the Swiss Trade Union Confederation (CGB-USS). This scenario was not at all foreseen by the electoral college.”



This week, the Geneva-based ILO (pictured in conference) is renewing its governing bodies, which have the unique feature of being tripartite, with representatives of governments, employers and employees. A process that highlights geopolitical tensions.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which is the representative body of workers, does not include China and suspended Russia following the aggression in Ukraine. These are two countries that are reputed to play an important lobbying role within this organisation. Two “vacant” places were reserved for them under pressure from trade unions in the South.

Fiction of the ‘Global South’

Alexey Zharkov, a representative of a union (the Federation of Free Trade Unions of Russia, FNPR) that has come out in favour of Vladimir Putin's “special military operation” and is involved in the

occupation of Ukrainian territories, has been a member of the ILO Governing Body since 2017. “In view of the unprecedented campaign against him, we are satisfied with his result,” says Alexander Chelyakov, spokesman for the Russian Mission to the United Nations in Geneva. “He is a very competent and experienced member of the Workers’ Group.” With 88 votes, the Chinese candidate, another surprise, was also one of the worst elected members of a body comprising 14 full members, 19 deputies and 19 substitutes.

Ukrainian trade unionist Vasyl Andreyev was appointed to one of these 19 alternate positions. This vote was taken by consensus, with no opposition expressed. “This is the first time that a Ukrainian has joined the Workers' Group. It's a great promotion,” he says. “It's also a new responsibility for us.”

He does, however, have one regret: that he did not stand for the vacant deputy post to block the Russian trade unionist. “It's our fault,” he explains, “we didn't dare do it.” Why not? Because the leaders of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) made it clear to the Ukrainians that they wouldn't stand a chance because of the “Global South’s” support for Russia, and that it was better “not to break international solidarity”. “It was taking the risk of losing in a bloc vote.”

Policy of non-collaboration with Russian unions

According to several sources, Russia and China actively campaigned in favour of their candidates by mobilising the South, in particular through the BRICS+ organisation, with an argument based on anti-colonialism. “We were told that the Global South would vote against the Global North,” continues Vasyl Andreyev. “The reality is different. The weak result for the Russian candidate shows that there is less and less support for the warmongers.”

“The Russian vote, in particular, but also the Chinese one, is a huge slap in the face,” adds Luca Cirigliano. It shows that the chequebook diplomacy practised by Moscow and Beijing has not worked. It’s a very good sign for the ILO and international trade unionism.”

ITUC “will continue its policy of non-collaboration with the FNPR, in accordance with the resolution taken by the ILO Governing Body in March 2022”, says its spokesperson Philippe Gousenbourger. He writes to *Le Temps* that, contrary to the fears expressed by European trade unionists, Luc Triangle, ITUC General Secretary, “will not be taking part in the BRICS trade union forum to be held in Russia in September”.

Are Quebec, Canadian and international trade unions supporting Vladimir Putin’s supporters? About a vote on the ILO’s Governing Body

Source: Presse-Toi a Gauche, Quebec

By Martin Gallié

(June 7, 2024) As important as this question is in determining the political orientation of trade union leaderships, it is difficult to give a clear answer. Let’s just say that the international trade union organisations do not shine in terms of transparency, while the issues of international solidarity are second-rate within the national unions.

In June 2024, elections will be held for workers’ representatives on the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). This tripartite organisation (made up of government

representatives, employers and workers) is responsible for adopting minimum labour law standards. For example, the question of the international legality of the right to strike is currently one of the most hotly debated issues within the ILO. It is therefore an organisation that plays an important role for the working class, hence the importance of choosing its representatives carefully.

Workers' delegates from each ILO member country vote for the 33 members of the Governing Body who represent workers' interests: 14 permanent members and 19 deputies, plus 19 alternates. To prepare for the election, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the world's largest international trade union organisation, appointed an eight-member Global Selection Committee made up of the ITUC's main leaders and those of the various regional confederations (Asia-Pacific, Africa, Europe and the Americas). The committee was tasked with drawing up three indicative lists (for permanent, deputy and replacement positions) of candidates. These lists are then communicated to the ILO delegates before the vote to indicate the names of the candidates who have received the ITUC's support.

At its last meeting, however, the ITUC Selection Committee was unable to agree on the entire list of 19 deputy members. More specifically, the proposal to leave the 19th seat vacant "was discussed", considering that this position would then probably be filled during the ILO vote by a representative of the Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia (FNPR), Russia's main trade union centre ([see links here](#)). In the end, with 6 votes in favour, one against and one abstention, the Selection Committee decided to leave the seat vacant. Only the General Secretary of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC), Esther Lynch, voted against, "on the basis of the clear mandate from her region not to leave any seat likely to be occupied by a candidate from the FNPR (Russia)".

Rafael Freire, General Secretary of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA)—whose members include the Canadian Labour Congress, including the Workers Federation of Quebec (FTQ), the Confederation of National Unions (CSN) and the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (CSD)—abstained on the grounds that "his region had a proposal in favour of including a representative of the most representative workers' organisation in the Russian Federation on the ITUC list".

Admittedly, this is only an indicative vote by the ITUC's World Selection Committee, since it is the workers' delegates to the ILO's International Labour Conference who will ultimately elect the representatives of their choice to the ILO's Governing Body on June 9 or 10. However, this support for the FNPR is strongly condemned by those who are committed to international trade union solidarity.

First of all, this support is completely absurd, given that the ILO Governing Body has firmly condemned the aggression in Ukraine and put an end to its cooperation with Russia. What's more, the ITUC itself has suspended the FNPR's participation in its activities since May 2022—following a General Council committee of enquiry—because of its unwavering support for Vladimir Putin and his "special operation" in Ukraine.

So, as incoherent as it may seem, ITUC leaders are now supporting the ILO candidacy of a member whom they suspended on the grounds that he was violating its Constitution, and in particular the commitment that: "The Confederation proclaims the right of all peoples to self-determination and to live free from aggression and totalitarianism under a government of their choice."

But this support is just as shameful when you consider that the FNPR has openly pledged its support for the war effort in Ukraine, that it is seizing Ukrainian trade union assets in the occupied

territories, that its delegates are giving Vladimir Putin a standing ovation at the opening speech of its latest congress, confirming *de facto* its complete submission to and complicity with the Putin regime. This support is a betrayal not only of the Ukrainian trade union centres, which are vainly calling for international solidarity and the exclusion of the FNPR, but also of the Russian workers who are members of the Russian Confederation of Labour (KTR), Russia's second largest trade union centre, who have courageously taken a stand against the war.

To explain this support, some argue, more or less openly, on grounds of “realpolitik”, i.e. opposing “Western” imperialism, or on grounds of organisation and representativeness: the FNPR is one of the largest trade union centres, it accounts for 17% of ITUC members, and its suspension would have major organisational and financial repercussions for the ITUC, etc.

But what contribution to the fight against imperialism or to the international emancipation of workers can be made by a trade union organisation, even if it is the largest in the world, which openly supports a war of aggression, denies the right of peoples to self-determination, supports racist, sexist and homophobic oligarchs and rulers, and repeats to anyone who will listen that Ukraine does not exist?

Locally, in Quebec as in Canada, it's time to ask ourselves what the Canadian workers' representative at the ILO will vote for [1]. But to date, we don't know who will be taking part, and the Quebec trade union centres and the Canadian Labour Congress, unlike other organisations, have yet to communicate anything on the subject.

Note

[1] We only know the union representatives at the ILO in 2023; note that there were FTQ, CSN and CSQ representatives at the time: https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_882714.pdf

The ILO elections are a test of international solidarity and trade union values

Source: [Global Labour Column](#)

By Frank Hoffer

(May 24, 2024) The International Labour Organisation (ILO) stands as a beacon of hope for workers worldwide. As the ILO's Governing Body elections approach, workers' delegates from 187 member-states face a critical decision.

The upcoming vote is not merely a choice between candidates, but a test of the international trade union movement's commitment to its core values of democracy, independence, and solidarity. In this pivotal moment, the workers' delegates must navigate the complexities of global politics while remaining true to the principles that have guided the trade union movement for generations.

In particular, workers' delegates will have to take a position on the candidacy of the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), a state-controlled organisation which supports Russia's war against Ukraine and Vladimir Putin's regime at home.

ILO Governing Body members will be elected to serve for three years at the June International Labour Conference in Geneva. After an internal deliberation process, based on proposals from its regional organisations, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the world's largest

trade union body, has called on its affiliated national trade union centres to vote for 13 members (out of 14 available seats) and 18 deputy members (out of 19 available seats), identifying them by their names and including them on its lists distributed at the Conference ahead of the voting day. Each trade union delegate has 14 votes for the members and 19 votes for the deputy workers' members.^[1] There is no recommendation from the ITUC for whom its affiliated organisations should cast the 14th and the 19th votes respectively. However, it is expected that the All-China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) will nominate a candidate as a titular member and that the Russian FNPR will propose someone as a deputy member of the Governing Body.

Any candidate must gain at least 50% of the delegates' votes to be elected. The workers' delegates of the democratic trade unions will be faced with the choice of helping the FNPR over that threshold to obtain the necessary votes or denying their support to a trade union that is an integral part of Putin's Russia.

As a United Nations organisation, the ILO was founded with the purpose of establishing universal international labour standards for UN member states. Because its founders wanted to ensure that countries with large populations and/or great economic power take a permanent active role in the ILO, ten countries have a permanent seat on the ILO Governing Body's benches — Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Russia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. The ILO constitution has no comparable provision for employers' and workers' organisations.

For the ILO to function effectively, workers' and employers' representatives must come from genuinely independent organisations. Trade unions' credibility as independent voices for workers, not the size of a country, is essential for authentic tripartism (collaboration of three parties: governments, employers, and workers) and a meaningful ILO. Therefore, the size of China or Russia is no sufficient reason to have them on the workers' benches of the Governing Body.

Of course, size also plays a role in the election of workers' representatives. The opinion of a trade union leader representing ten million members may carry more weight than that of someone representing a smaller trade union. However, this has always been of secondary importance for the Workers' Group, which reflects trade unions from different regions and countries of different sizes, and which has even had one chairperson come from a tiny Caribbean Island.^[2] Previously, the ITUC and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) have always lived up to their historical responsibility to ensure that members of the Workers' Group represent genuine independent trade unions. If state-controlled trade unions are allowed to play an important role at the ILO, tripartism becomes a farce.

During the Cold War, the ICFTU made a concession by leaving a seat vacant, allowing Soviet trade unions to gain a seat on the ILO Governing Body's workers' benches.^[3] In recent years, a similar approach has been taken with the Chinese ACFTU. The Russian war against Ukraine has created a new situation. The ITUC affiliation of the FNPR has been suspended because the FNPR fully supports the war against Ukraine. For this reason, the ITUC has — for the first time this century — decided not to include the FNPR in its list of supported candidates for the Governing Body. For obvious reasons, the ITUC does not recommend its affiliates to vote for a trade union whose membership is suspended.

Luc Triangle, the General Secretary of the ITUC, just returned from a visit from Ukraine expressing the full solidarity of the international trade union movement with the Ukrainian people defending themselves against the Russian aggression. This position is incompatible with voting at the ILO for a Russian trade union that fully endorses Putin's war. By leaving a seat open in its recommendation

the ITUC has created a moment of truth. It exposes the FNPR and thus Putin's regime to a vote at the ILO. A vote Putin should not win.

From a trade union perspective, it is difficult to see a reason to support a FNPR representative on the workers' benches of the ILO Governing Body. Not only has the FNPR decided to fully support President Putin and his war of aggression, but it also became an occupying force in its own right by setting up local FNPR organisations in the occupied territories and taking over the property of the Ukrainian trade unions.

The FNPR is also fully behind Putin's increasingly authoritarian rule in Russia itself. Its voice is not heard defending democratic and workers' rights in Russia. Rather the FNPR has become an integral part of the repressive Putin regime, as was made again clear at the FNPR's last congress, where Putin received standing ovations.

The ILO has no influence on any decisions in Russia today. It cannot be assumed that the influence of the ILO to defend workers' rights will increase in Russia if the FNPR is represented in the Governing Body. The election of a FNPR representative to the ILO will not change anything for the better for Russian workers.

Some democratic trade unions have closer contacts with Russian trade unions through the BRICS Trade Union Forum^[4] and seem inclined to vote for a Russian representative. For quite different reasons, the BRICS countries and their trade unions sympathise with the idea of a multipolar world and hold critical views of the dominant global financial institutions and the hegemonic role of rich industrialised countries. But while countries from the Global South have ample reason to be critical of a globalisation shaped by Western dominance, such geopolitical considerations are not convincing reasons to vote for a puppet trade union of a regime that opposes everything the trade union movement stands for.

Trade union unity is important in a time of rising geopolitical tensions, but it needs to be based on common values and principles. With its unconditional backing of Putin's dictatorship, his vision of a Russian empire, and the war against Ukraine, the FNPR has made its choice. It has opted against the basic values of the international democratic trade union movement.

The trade unions in Ukraine are waging two fights, one for their country's freedom and one against the market liberalism of their government. They urgently need the ILO's support to change government policies that undermine workers' rights and labour protections in the name of economic reform. Ukrainian democracy is not perfect, and maintaining democracy in times of war is not easy. That is why Ukrainian trade unions are in urgent need of international solidarity.

It took the Ukrainian trade unions some time to propose a joint candidate for the ILO Governing Body, but in a last-minute decision, the ITUC managed to include them in the third list of substitute delegates. This decision, which will ensure their presence at the ILO, is important not only for the Ukrainian trade unions but also for the international democratic trade union movement and the ITUC's campaign for democracy.

The upcoming vote at the International Labour Conference is a call for each and every individual trade union to take a position based on its trade union values, its political vision and its moral compass. How workers' delegates will use their 19th vote will be a global signal. Let us hope that they will not fail to support the aspiration of the workers of the world to make strong, independent and democratic trade unions the voice of the workers at the ILO. The fewer votes the FNPR candidate gets the stronger the signal.

Notes

[1] In conformity with article 7 of the Constitution of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Labour Conference (ILC) elects the members of the Governing Body for a three-year term. In accordance with Part 6 of the Standing Orders of the ILC, elections are carried out by a secret ballot by three separate electoral colleges: the Government electoral college, the Employers' electoral college and the Workers' electoral college. Only workers' delegates can vote for workers' representatives on the Governing Body.

[2] Leroy Trotman, General Secretary of the Barbados Workers' Union (BWU) chaired the ILO Workers' Group from 2002 to 2011.

[3] The ICFTU was dissolved on 31 October 2006 when it merged with the [World Confederation of Labour](#) (WCL) to form the [International Trade Union Confederation](#) (ITUC).

[4] The BRICS Trade Union Forum (BTUF), an alliance of union federations from Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

Anger and Consternation within European Trade Unions: Will Russian Union Representative Supportive of Putin's War Effort and Repression Be Elected to the ILO's Governing Body?

Source: [Geneva Observer](#)

By Philippe Mottaz

(May 29, 2024) The possible election on June 10 to the International Labour Organisation's Governing Body of a representative of the Russian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (FNPR), a state-controlled organisation allied with Vladimir Putin, has sparked an acrimonious debate within the labour movement. Ukrainian trade unions, together with a number of their European counterparts, are concerned that the election of the FNPR candidate for the Workers' Group of the ILO's Governing Body—the UN organisation's executive organ—could deal a blow to the credibility of the global labour movement and the ILO itself.

Seats on the workers' benches of the Governing Body are to a large extent allocated by the Brussels-based International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), the world's largest trade union body, after a consultation process with its regional organisations. According to an internal ITUC report obtained by the *Geneva Observer*, Esther Lynch, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), opposed the ITUC's proposal to leave a place open on its list "that could potentially be filled by a candidate from the FNPR." In a letter to the ITUC, the Nordic Council of Trade Unions, which represents unions in Scandinavian [sic] countries, says this eventuality would be "unacceptable".

Ukrainian and European trade unions also denounce what they consider to be a misguided posture of accommodation towards Russia and other governments opposed to workers' rights from the leadership of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and some of its non-European members in Latin America and elsewhere.

Some of the global union federation's harshest critics privately contend that, since his election following [the "Qatargate" money-for-influence scandal](#), the ITUC's Secretary-General Luc Triangle

has adopted a strategy that privileges access over substance, in his quest to have the ITUC contribute to the “revival of multilateralism,” according to internal documents seen by the *Geneva Observer*.

A well-connected ILO watcher expressed to me the view that “[i]n the FNPR case, the ITUC leadership has shown yet another sign of its weakness. While not supporting the FNPR’s candidacy, it didn’t outright oppose it. We already saw that pattern with Qatar: a loud promise to defend the migrant workers’ rights only to end up supporting an agreement between the ILO and Qatar, a country that still forbids independent unions.”

The FNPR Flashpoint

The ITUC suspended its affiliation with the FNPR following Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine and decided not to include the Russian trade union in its list of workers candidates to the Governing Body. Nonetheless, European and Ukrainian trade unions remain highly critical of the ITUC senior leadership for not opposing the FNPR candidate unequivocally. “The “trade union” of Vladimir Putin’s genocidal regime has no place on the ILO’s Governing Body,” wrote the Ukrainian trade union official Vasyl Andreyev in an opinion piece in Swiss daily *Le Temps*, which first broke the FNPR story.

“We fight every day with our work and with our lives to defend democracy, human, social and trade union rights for a just peace and for freedom in our country and throughout Europe, against the aggression of Vladimir Putin’s fascist regime. We are currently confronted with a proposal, supported by [the ITUC] General Secretary to include in the ILO’s Governing Body a trade union confederation which supports Vladimir Putin. We call on the ITUC leadership to understand this point: [An] organisation as complicit in war crimes as the FNPR [cannot be] represented on the Governing Body of the ILO.”

“The FNPR gave a standing ovation to Putin at a [recent meeting](#). It openly supports his war effort and repressive campaign in Donbass and in Ukraine. Vladimir Putin is under indictment from the International Criminal Court. The situation is absolutely unprecedented, and the question of this election is a clear red line for us,” Luca Cirigliano, the Swiss Union Confederation’s Central Secretary told me, stressing that “this is not an election to some technical commission but to the ILO’s highest organ.”

To fully understand the uproar created by the situation and its stakes for the international labour movement, it is important to keep in mind the unique tripartite governance model of the ILO, composed of governments, workers, and employers. The Governing Body (GB) is the organisation’s executive body. According to the ILO’s website, “it is composed of 56 titular members (28 Governments, 14 Employers and 14 Workers) and 66 deputy members (28 Governments, 19 Employers and 19 Workers). Ten of the titular government seats are permanently held by States of chief industrial importance (Brazil, China, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States), while the other Government members are elected by the Conference every three years. [...] The Employer and Worker members are elected in their individual capacity.”

Should the FNPR representative be elected, it would, labour experts and activists say, potentially modify the GB’s dynamics. The ILO constitution requires that workers (and employers) be represented by genuinely independent organisations. However, if “state-controlled trade unions are allowed to play an important at the ILO,” as in the case of the FNPR, “tripartism becomes a farce,”

explains Frank Hoffer, a former German ILO official now associated with the Global Labour University.

New Geopolitical Realities are also Shaping the Trade Union Conversation

Interestingly, the FNPR episode also illustrates how, beginning with the rise of the BRICS and a more self-assertive Global South, new geopolitical realities are increasingly shaping international organisations. “Some democratic trade unions have closer contacts with the Russian trade unions through the BRICS Trade Union Forum and seem to be inclined to vote for a Russian representative. For quite different reasons, the BRICS countries and the trade unions of these countries have sympathy for a multipolar world [...] and a critical view on the dominant global financial institutions and the hegemonic role of the rich industrialised countries,” analyses Hoffer.

But for many in the trade union world, an ideological aversion to the US and other rich economies is a poor reason to justify support for countries like Russia and others that oppose everything the trade union movement is supposed to stand for. They are concerned by the ITUC strategy as expressed in a 2023 internal document: “Our determination to rebuild multilateralism implies the participation of all trade union forces in all countries, including the state-controlled ACFTU in China and the FNPR in Russia, whether or not these organisations are affiliated to the ITUC. It will also be necessary for the ITUC to take part in the next meeting of BRICS+ labour and employment ministers in Russia. Not to do so would contribute to accentuating geopolitical divisions and putting an end to multilateralism.”

“This is a controversial path. From a workers’ rights perspective, reviving multilateralism shouldn’t be about offering new spaces of action and influence to totalitarian or authoritarian countries that stand against every value embodied by labour,” a trade unionist privy to the ITUC and ILO debates told me. “It would only weaken the credibility of the union movement, of the ILO, and democracy itself.”

Will the FNPR candidate be elected on June 10? A candidate needs to get 50% of the delegates votes, and elections are conducted by secret ballot. Only workers’ delegates can vote for workers’ representatives on the Governing Body. What will be the score of the Russian FNPR candidate? Could he stumble? Will Vasyl Andreyev, the Ukrainian candidate who enjoys the support of the ITUC, be able to rally a significant majority behind his candidacy? “By giving the FNPR the opportunity to put forward their candidate, the ITUC creates a moment of truth,” says Frank Hoffer. “It exposes the FNPR, and therefore Putin’s regime, to a vote at the ILO. A vote they should not win.” For other ILO watchers, this election will also serve as a test of the ITUC’s current leadership and strategy.

See also

[1. Qatar’s presidency of the International Labour Conference raises eyebrows](#)

Worker struggles in Ukraine

Zaporizhzhia: repression continues at the hospital

Source: *Be like Nina*

[Reminder: On 23 May (see entry below), we learned that the workers' initiative group fighting against the closure of the hospital had received a summons to mobilise from the TCC, the Ukrainian military registration and enlistment office.

(8 June 2024) The Zaporizhzhian Oncology Centre organised a crackdown: in a single day, 14 employees were reprimanded, and two others were dismissed. The nursing staff at the Zaporizhzhia Centre, who are protesting against the liquidation of the specialist centre, continue to be threatened, and the new administration has now decided to launch punitive action.



Since the committee's action began, 16 employees have been dismissed. The centre's employees (pictured) accuse Zaporizhzhia of violating the decision of the National Security Council. They signed a collective appeal and decided to take legal action not on behalf of the Cancer Centre, but on behalf of the medical staff. The court did not accept this complaint, arguing that the medical staff collective is not a legal institution.

Employees of maternity unit No. 9 in Zaporizhzhia have not received a salary for three months

Source : *suspline.media*



(31 May 2024) The employees of the 9th maternity unit in the town of Zaporizhzhia have not received a salary for three months in a row. On May 20, 2024, during an extraordinary meeting of the Zaporizhzhia town council, four employees of the ninth maternity unit (pictured) attempted to enter the meeting room.

However, they were unsuccessful, said the head of the maternity unit,

Yevhen Averchenko: "There were four of us: me, a neonatologist and two midwives, we tried to be present at the town council meeting, we wanted to be heard, our wishes, our cry of despair. We

were surrounded by police and filmed by video cameras. We've been working here for years, decades, this is our second home, and we leave the maternity ward in tears, sobbing. Because we are physically forced to leave, because there is no money to survive.” Olena Peycheva, medical director of maternity unit no. 9, said that the facility's management had appealed several times to the municipal and regional authorities, but had received no response.

Ties between workers and soldiers

Source: *suspline.media, KVPU*

(31 May 2024) The regional association of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine (NGPU) in Western Donbass and the main branches of the NPGU that are part of it are not breaking ties with their colleagues who were mining coal before the enemy attack but are now defending our country against the Russian aggressors, weapons in hand.



Recently, activists handed over a first-person view (FPV) video helmet to their colleague from the Pavlogradska mine. He is now defending the Kharkiv region and needs this equipment to fight his enemies more effectively. The 103rd Battalion of the 108th Territorial Defence Brigade, in which the miners in western Donbass are currently fighting, received a ventilation system and tools from the trade unionists. And the military unit of the separate 128th Territorial Defence Brigade, which is protecting the country in the direction of Zaporizhzhia and where miners from the Dnipropetrovsk region are also serving, was given a construction machine needed to build the fortifications.

“These are our colleagues, whether they work in the mines or wear military uniforms, and we have to help them”, says Yuriy Kryvoruchko, head of the NPGU trade union in Western Donbass.

Mobilisation at Zaporizhzhia hospital

Source : *suspline.media*



(24 May 2024) The region's management has decided to liquidate this medical institution, which will force many patients to seek paid treatment at another hospital. The hospital staff have filed a complaint and a petition on the President's Zelensky's website. According to Yesayants, director of the hospital opposed to its closure, the team filed a

complaint in an attempt to prevent the reorganisation of the cancer centre, after which events that

took place are difficult to consider as a coincidence. “On May 15, my deputy Yury Barshak was arrested near his home by representatives of the TCC [recruitment service], who sent him a summons,” explains Mykhailo Yesayants. “It turned out that he had been wanted since May 11. Our team was promised that no one would be made redundant. People don’t believe it. On May 23, it was revealed that the workers’ initiative group fighting against the closure of the hospital had received a summons from the TCC to mobilise.

The staff petition has already been signed by 11,433 people.

Trade union support to the military

Source. KVPU

(17 May 2024) The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) and its sectoral and regional organisations are constantly helping union members who are on the front line in the Ukrainian Armed Forces, defending our country against the Russian aggressors.

Recently, members of the Independent Miners’ Union of Ukraine (NPGU) supported the secretary of the NPGU’s main branch at the Eastern Mining Plant, Dmytro Bondarev (pictured, left of photo), and his comrades-in-arms. They responded to the defenders’ request and bought and transferred to the front new, much more powerful, batteries for the radio stations. The chargers will improve the quality of communication between soldiers during longer combat missions.

And a little earlier, the Kropyvnytskyi organisation of the Free Trade Union of Education and Science of Ukraine handed over batteries, which the sappers cannot do without, to the military unit where Dmytro Bondarev serves.

Together, we are a force! We are bringing Victory closer!



Solidarity with Ukrainian workers in publishing and retail in light of recent attacks

Source: UNI Global Union

(May 31, 2024) UNI Global Union stands in unwavering solidarity with Ukrainian workers and trade unions in the publishing, and retail sectors following the recent devastating Russian attacks.

In May, Russian missiles destroyed one of Ukraine’s largest printing houses, Factor-Druk (pictured), just a week before the International Book Arsenal Festival. This heinous act, targeting the cultural and intellectual heart of Ukraine, has paralyzed almost the entire book sector. The attack

resulted in the tragic loss of seven civilians who were diligently working at the printing house and left 22 others injured.

Additionally, a recent Russian strike on a Kharkiv supermarket claimed 12 lives, further highlighting the indiscriminate nature of these brutal attacks on civilian infrastructure and workers.

”These attacks on civilians are abhorrent and must be condemned by the international community. The deliberate targeting of workers is a blatant violation of international norms and human decency,” said Christy Hoffman, General Secretary of UNI Global Union.

Ukraine: Domestic Workers Win As President Signs New Law

Source: Solidarity Centres

May 24, 2024) Soon after [organising to advocate for formal recognition as workers](#) and protections at work, domestic workers in Ukraine won a significant victory when President Volodymyr Zelenskyy signed a new law on May 22 regulating domestic work and affording new protections to domestic workers.

Significantly, the law recognises and defines domestic work and domestic workers, and affords them all labor rights and guarantees, including normal working hours, overtime compensation, daily and weekly rest periods, and paid annual leave. It guarantees domestic workers’ right to a safe and healthy work environment and makes employers responsible for ensuring safe working conditions. The law also establishes an employment contract as the primary means of formalising the working relationship and sets a minimum age for domestic workers.



Last year, the first [survey](#) to evaluate the working conditions of Ukraine’s domestic workers found that lacking contracts and formal recognition left most respondents vulnerable to low pay, wage theft, confusion about employment status, exclusion from the country’s pension system and minimal capacity to exercise their right to freedom of association. Most reported working without formal terms and conditions of employment.

“This is an important development for Ukraine’s human rights protection and Euro-integration efforts,” said Tristan Masat, Solidarity Center Ukraine country program director. “Domestic and care workers are among the most isolated and vulnerable groups in the economy, and with so many Ukrainians working in-household jobs in the EU, it’s valuable to see the government take a strong and progressive position on the rights of these workers in Ukraine.”

While the new law allows domestic workers and employers to codify the terms of employment in a contract and protects domestic workers under Ukraine’s labor laws, much work remains to enforce the law and secure better protections for domestic workers.

Tetiana Lauhina, founder of the Union of Home Staff (pictured), said the law has been a long time in coming. “We have been waiting for this law since 2015. It’s a strong step in the right direction. Next, we’d like to see the International Labor Organisation’s Convention 189 on domestic workers ratified by Ukraine. Its ratification and implementation is a major goal for the Union of Home Staff.”

Community struggles in Ukraine

Illegal rubbish dumps on the increase in Mariupol

Source: *The municipality of Mariupol in exile*

(7 June 2024) Citizens are complaining about the existence of illegal rubbish dumps in various neighbourhoods. The public services in the occupied city lack the necessary equipment and staff. As a result, Mariupol is turning into a city of disorder and rubbish.



In particular, one has been created at 36 Troitska Street. Citizens report that mountains of rubbish have already formed there, and that a second dump is already growing nearby. A rubbish tip continues to exist near the town's central market, which was destroyed by the Russians. The population fears the spread of infections and fires. Since the beginning of 2024, 207 fires in the city have been caused by illegal rubbish dumps. In summer, this figure can be several times higher. But the occupiers continue to do nothing.

Beatings at a mobilisation centre

Source: *Patrick Le Tréhondat*



(June 6, 2024) On 5 June, around a hundred residents of Baranivka (pictured) gathered near the second department of the Zvyagel district territorial mobilisation centre. The people demanded an explanation for the death of 32-year-old Serhiy Kovalchuk, whose relatives claim that he was beaten at the TCC [territorial recruitment centres].

“Until the investigation is complete, no one can say whether it was a homicide or a fall. The only thing we’re asking is that the people involved be suspended while the investigation is underway. We are going to raise funds to hire a lawyer,” explains one resident. “In Baranivka, this centre has a bad reputation—there have been cases of beatings, but people have generally survived, but it has

even got to the point where one person has died”, said Nadiya Oshatyuk. An association in Jytomyr has sent a request to the TCC for comments on whether there have ever been cases of beatings in the second department of the Zvyagel district territorial recruitment and social assistance centre.

Kyiv: relatives and friends of prisoners demonstrate

Source : *suspline.media*

On 1 June, a rally was held in Kyiv in support of civilian prisoners. Relatives and friends came to the square with photos of captured Ukrainians and posters calling for their return home. Around fifty people gathered on Mykhailivska Square (see photo) and called for the return of the civilians from captivity. Those taking part



in the action said they had not seen their loved ones for more than two years. Some had received letters with a short message: “I’m alive, wait at home.”

Houses have been demolished and the residents of Mariupol have been left homeless!

Source: *Mariupol Resistance Committee, Patrick Le Tréhondat*

(May 28, 2024) Under occupation, gatherings of citizens who have found themselves without housing continue (pictured). For example, residents of the stadium district on the left bank recorded a video message in which they stated that



the occupier was planning to build housing for Russians on the site of their demolished homes.

In the spring of 2022, the Russian army bombed around 50 houses in the stadium area. After the occupation began, they were dismantled. And recently, Azovstalska Street was renamed Tula Avenue without asking the residents themselves. And now the people who lived in the dismantled houses have found themselves without the right to compensation.

The occupiers are doing everything they can to leave the city’s residents on the streets, and citizens of the Russian Federation are being invited into the city. That’s how the invaders put their plans to Russify the city into action.

Student struggles in Ukraine

Railway workers support students

Source: Priama Diia (Direct Action) [extracts]

(June 11, 2024) On 6 June, a demonstration against the merger of the State University of Infrastructure and Technology (DUIIT) with the National Transport University (NTU) took place in front of the Ministry of Education and Science in Kyiv. The demonstration was initiated by the university's administration and trade union but was also supported by the university's students Direct Action activists.



It should be noted that most of the people present at the demonstration were teachers and administrative staff. We also managed to talk to the students present. In their view, the merger of DUIIT with NTU does not mean a merger of the two institutions, but the effective liquidation of the former - this is what they protested against, because, in their view, it violates their right to choose their place of study. The possible reduction of faculties and the abolition of distance learning also raised concerns. The students present noted that they generally have good relations with the administration and that the management is open to dialogue with the students.

As far as teachers are concerned, the position of the Ministry of Education and Science is not as strong: "Your usefulness depends on the number of students and the amount of work", Sharov replied to a professor from one of the university's departments when asked about possible redundancies.

The demonstration against the reorganisation was supported by the railway workers' union, and DUIIT staff themselves reported 560 signatures in an appeal from university staff and students to the Department for Education and Science, calling for the reorganisation to be cancelled and for transparent dialogue with university management and staff to be guaranteed.

Statement by the railway workers' union (extracts)

Source: Trade Union of Railway Workers of Ukraine

(June 4, 2024) We support the protest of academic staff, students and all employees of the University against the reorganisation. The staff of the State University of Infrastructure and Technology have called on the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science to withdraw the draft CMU Ordinance on reorganising the university by merging it with the National University of Transport.

DUIIT faculty, staff and students are protesting against the secret, unreasonable and non-transparent decision of the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Science to reorganise the

institution and merge it with the National University of Transport in the middle of the admissions campaign....

[Our union] also calls on the International and European Transport Workers' Federations to support the just demands of DUIT staff and our union expresses its solidarity.

Kyiv: new aggression by fascists against students of the Direct Action union

(May 21, 2024) On Monday, May 20, two activists, a boy and a girl, of Priama Diia (Direct Action) in Kyiv were hanging up posters of an event presenting the *Act* zine, which should take place on Sunday, May 26. During the paste-up in the city centre, they were approached by three people, one of whom was a soldier. The soldier asked if they were from Priama Diia and then said “Oh, so you’re anti-fascists! And I’m a Nazi.”

After that, the three attackers took out a pepper spray and peppered the union activists. Arseniy, head of Priama Diia cell at the Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, was also beaten. Eventually the attackers escaped. The victims have already written a statement to the police, and the trade union is trying to attract a lawyer to assist the police.

Odessa: students and soldiers repel the far right

On Saturday May 18, the student union Priama Diia (Direct Action) presented the first issue of its zine Act at the Odessa regional library. However, just as the first students were settling into the room, far-right elements tried to prevent the meeting from taking place. But they were quickly pushed back. This was followed by clashes in the streets of Odessa during which soldiers who had come to defend the meeting were injured, including a libertarian soldier returning from the front on crutches who was sprayed with pepper spray. A few weeks ago in the same city, the far right succeeded in preventing an exhibition of works by the libertarian artist David Chichkan. This Saturday they were thwarted. Below we publish a statement from the student union.

Source: <https://laboursolidarity.org/en/n/3149/odessa-kyiv--solidarity-with-priama-diia-student-unionists>

Direct Action statement



(May 19, 2024) Yesterday, the Odessa regional library, named after [Mykhailo Hrushevsky](#), hosted a presentation of Direct Action’s magazine.

The event (pictured) attracted a great deal of interest, as evidenced by the fact that there were no empty seats in the room. As well as students, the presentation was also attended by university graduates, including our fellow

soldiers from Ecoplatform. Around forty people attended the event, happy to share their experiences and hear stories of the struggle for better learning conditions and education for all. However, not all of them had good intentions.

During the presentation, unidentified masked men with Nazi symbols on their clothing appeared. The uninvited individuals began to intimidate library staff and event participants, including with physical violence. During the conflict, the aggressive young men attacked the soldiers with pepper spray before fleeing.

We have already mentioned that far-right violence is increasingly common on Ukrainian streets, and yesterday's incident is further confirmation of this. Hate-motivated violence is always unacceptable; it seems ten times more savage in times of war: while the country is resisting imperial aggression, some young men can think of nothing better than disrupting conferences and obstructing trade union activities (which is also a violation of the law). What's more, they attack the military, thanks to whom they can, in principle, remain quiet in the rear.



We are deeply grateful to all those who attended the presentation with sincere interest. We would also like to thank the library and the people who helped us organise the event. At Direct Action, we believe that Ukrainian soldiers should be supported with hryvnias, not pepper spray, as right-wing radicals do. That's why we're inviting you to take part in Solidarity Collective's collection of a van for the anarchist soldier Panko.

We urge you to take care of yourself, maintain zero tolerance of hate violence and stand with us. The truth is on our side.

Women's struggles in Ukraine



[See: Ukrainian Feminist Kitchen #7 — Labour rights in the contexts of Ukraine and the UK](#)

In Ukraine, women are taking their defence and that of the country into their own hands

Source: Pierre Alonso, mediapart

(May 5, 2024) They have learnt to live without their men, who have gone to the front and some of whom are not coming back. Faced with the continuing war, they have decided that one day they will join the army, or that now is the time to learn how to protect themselves from Russian soldiers.

Meetings around Kyiv.

On a Saturday morning, a clearing in a Kyiv wood comes alive. At the end of April, the trees have regained their leaves, it's snowing with pollen and the mud is beginning to dry. Dasha, 27, is not here to enjoy the countryside. Shaken by a sudden sob, she recounts: "I buried my husband yesterday. He died in Avdiivka [a town in the Donbass region surrounded and then taken by the Russian army in February - editor's note] two months ago. Now that my husband is gone, I want to join the army.

It was also a tragedy that brought Tetyana, a lawyer with a tight bun tied behind her head, here. Her brother, a soldier, disappeared "a year and three months ago" in the Kreminna forest on the Donbass front. "If they find my brother one day, I'll go and fight. If not, I'll have to stay with my elderly parents", says the forty-year-old. In the meantime, she is learning to handle weapons. Around ten women have paid 1,500 hryvnias, or around €35, to take the short day's training offered by the Walkyrie collective (pictured).

“We’re going to give you self-confidence,” says the organisation’s founder, Darina Trebykh, as she launches the workshops. Women are not here just to make borscht in the kitchen. The previous week, Lisa, another Valkyrie leader, had given a similar welcome to the thirty or so participants, the overwhelming majority of whom were women: “No one will reproach you here if you do something wrong. Women can do anything.”

On the day’s programme: shooting stance with an automatic weapon, dismantling and loading the weapon, rudiments of war medicine, and for those who have already completed the training, a group assault on a building. Elsewhere in the Kyiv region, other groups are learning to fly drones, hold trenches and fire long arms.



These courses are not reserved for women—some participants come with their partners—but the collective, set up two years ago after the liberation of the Kyiv region, was born out of a desire to help Ukrainian women defend themselves. “Women came to us because they didn’t feel protected while their husbands were at the front,” says Darina Trebykh. Herself a resident of Hostomel, a suburb of the capital that was the scene of a fierce and decisive battle, she learnt to shoot from National Guard soldiers she met at the start of the invasion, when she was struggling to help the residents of her district.

A fear of the occupation

“I used to be a model. I swapped my heels for Rangers, but I still have a manicure”, says Darina Trebykh, 35, pointing to her khaki shoes and pale pink nails. Women who consider themselves fragile come, as do more seasoned women, it’s open to everyone”, adds Lisa.

Originally from Berdiansk, at the other end of the country, on the shores of the Sea of Azov, she had the painful experience of living for a month under occupation. “I saw what it was like to be unarmed and without military skills in an occupied city. It was as if my fists were tied, I wanted to do something but I couldn’t.” Just after leaving her town, on March 24, 2022, the young woman learned about the military training.

The fear of living or reliving the occupation is one of the motivations of the participants. Almost 800 days and 800 nights after the start of the invasion, it has now been established that the occupation was accompanied by sexual violence, including rape, committed by Russian soldiers. The [Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine](#), set up by the United Nations, documents cases in each of its reports. It has documented cases of rape committed against women, girls and men in nine regions.

Rape remains a taboo subject in Ukraine, and victims have to face “stigmatisation and feelings of shame”, notes the latest report from the UN Independent Investigation Commission. “A woman

must know how to protect herself and be respected. It's a horrible subject, I wouldn't survive, I'd rather die", confides Tetyana, the lawyer.

The organisers of the collective are noticing renewed interest in their training sessions when the situation deteriorates on the front. At the moment, it is not good for the Ukrainian forces who are retreating in the Donbass. The general staff fears that these advances by the Russian army are the prelude to major offensives before the start of the summer.

For Olha, aged 40, there is no doubt that Russia has not given up on taking Kyiv. She dutifully follows the training sessions every Saturday. Darya, who returned to Ukraine with her daughter in the summer of 2023, doesn't want to depend on anyone for her family's safety: "I want to learn how to protect myself and my daughter," she says during the midday break.

Heavy military casualties

These courses, given by soldiers on leave, are not intended to replace army training. For many, they are a first contact with weapons, before possibly going further. Unlike men aged between 25 and 60, women were not subject to compulsory mobilisation. They can leave the country, which is forbidden to men aged 18 to 60, with some exceptions.

Anna, a 38-year-old lawyer who grew up in the Crimea, does not rule out enlisting one day. Liudmila, who has just turned thirty, thinks about it "every day". This finance consultant has spent her last two Saturdays with the Valkyrie collective and intends to continue until the last module. She explains: "The war goes on, our soldiers are scarce, they will have to be replaced. Russia has four times the population of Ukraine.

Two years of deadly war have decimated the ranks of the army, which is struggling to replenish them. The figure is secret, but Ukrainian losses were close to 200,000 (70,000 killed, 120,000 wounded) last summer, according to Pentagon estimates quoted by the *New York Times*. Volunteers are in short supply. The government is reluctant to recruit en masse, a measure that is bound to be unpopular. It is content to adjust the parameters of mobilisation by slightly lowering the age limit from 27 to 25, toughening penalties against recalcitrant recruits, and ruling out the automatic demobilisation of soldiers after several years' service...

We know that at some point there won't be any men left and that we'll have to mobilise the women," says Lisa, one of the leaders of the Valkyrie collective.

Calling Ukrainian women into the armed forces is not yet on the agenda. In an interview with *The Times*, Oksana Grigorieva, gender adviser to the commander of the land forces, opened the door, citing the Israeli model of mixed conscription as an example (contacted by Mediapart, she no longer wishes to comment on the subject).

In the clearing, the subject is divisive. "Society isn't ready yet", says Tetyana. Darina Trebykh is not in favour in absolute terms, but sees no other way out sooner or later, "because the pool of men is going to dry up". Dasha, who was widowed before the age of 30, is "completely in favour": "We are more resistant to stress, women are strong". Lisa, with her tattooed arms and determined air, thinks we should have started back in 2014: "We know that there won't be any men left at some point and that we'll have to mobilise the women."

An army that is still under-feminised

Some 65,000 women soldiers already serve in the army, representing around 7.3% of the workforce. This is low compared with the United States and France (around 17% of the workforce). Until 2018,

combat positions were not open to women. Slava, a 19-year-old war casualty who helps out with the Valkyrie collective, recounts being saved by a military nurse when a drone dropped a grenade on him. “Women are doing a fantastic job in our army”, praises the young man, whose cheeks are still round, who has a prosthesis on his right leg and his left hand is still badly damaged, six months after the incident. “Sexism is still rife. Very few women are sent to the front”, says Lisa.

Olena, who volunteered seventeen months ago, served in the prestigious and respected 47th Brigade. Contacted by telephone from the Donbass where she is deployed, she remembers that she was not taken seriously at first. She had to prove herself, more than the others: “Not once did I back down, not once did I complain. The way my brothers-in-arms and commanders looked at me started to change. After several months under the orders of film-maker Oleh Sentsov, she joined another unit, made up of “tough guys”, who again looked at her sideways. “After two weeks and the first missions, things got better. I showed that I was even stronger than some of the men.”

An optimist by nature, she remains “convinced that joining the army is still much more difficult for a woman”. That’s one of the reasons why she welcomes the Valkyrie collective’s initiations. “It’s great that women are trying out and discovering what they can and can’t do. Even if they don’t become soldiers, it doesn’t matter, they’ll have skills and qualifications. They are an example to us all.”

Other Ukraine news and analysis



Read and sign your support for this declaration [here](#).

Power Station Bombing Redoubles Pressure on Ukraine

Source: Foreign Policy in Focus

By Simon Pirani

(June 5, 2024) A three-month Russian bombing campaign has destroyed much of Ukraine's electricity generation capacity and left civilians paying the price for the Western powers' incoherent policies.

Russia has fired dozens of missiles and drones at power stations simultaneously, to break through overburdened air defences. Some have been completely destroyed. Hundreds of towns and villages are suffering lengthy blackouts.



With much of the world's attention, and anger, focused on the multiple war crimes committed daily in Gaza—including mass murder of civilians and the leveling of infrastructure—the relentless Russian bombing has been out of the headlines.

But another human tragedy is in the making. It is hard to see how the system can be fixed by winter, and more people could be forced from their homes.

Here I report on the extent of the damage, the proposed responses, the gaps in Western policy that have aggravated the problem, and the prospects for an energy system facing an open-ended campaign of aggression.

[Read on here](#)

Working more to earn less

Source: *Social Movement* (Sotsialnyi Rukh)



(June 5, 2024) Claims that Ukrainians need to work longer show that the ruling elite is out of touch with the realities of life.

Recently, Daryna Marchak, First Deputy Minister of Social Policy (pictured), caused outrage by giving advice on how to escape poverty. The message is simple: people need to work as long as possible and not rely on state benefits. Firstly, Ukrainians are already becoming the “record holders” for the longest working week in Europe, often working in unhealthy conditions. Secondly, even after reaching retirement age, many are forced to continue working because of miserable pensions. Thirdly, the question arises as to why social deductions from wages are made today if the State has no intention of guaranteeing a decent old age.

Is this how supporters of neo-liberal doctrine understand “protection”?

In order to stabilise the solidarity-based pension system, which has suffered from unfavourable demographic changes, the government should now concentrate on combating undeclared work. Labour inspectorates should be given significant powers to detect undeclared work, otherwise we cannot expect any increase in revenue from social security contributions.

The compulsory funded pension system proposed by Mrs Marchak is a dangerous swindle that will allow financial speculators to transform part of pension funds into financial assets in transactions whose risks will be borne by the millions of people who have paid into the pension fund!

Ukraine does not have a developed stock market that could “multiply” pension assets, and the model currently proposed to the Verkhovna Rada provides no guarantees to protect savings against depreciation due to mismanagement. Because of the high risks, even the neoliberal International Monetary Fund has opposed this reform (not so much out of compassion for the people as out of fear of economic collapse).

Consequently, only a progressive tax system, including the taxation of luxuries, and the transformation of social protection into the *raison d’être* of the state can free people from the fear of being poor in old age.

Cherkassy: Put him in prison!

Source: Patrick Le Tréhondat



On June 6, residents of Cherkassy gathered in front of the Palace of Justice. They called for an end to the activities of the Moscow Patriarchate Church in Cherkassy. The trial of the metropolitan has been going on for over a year: in 2023, he was charged with inciting inter-religious enmity and denying the armed aggression of the Russian Federation. He has been under house arrest since April 12. “Why isn’t Metropolitan Theodosius behind bars?” A poster bearing this question was hung up by the participants in the action before the start of the hearing. One of the participants in the action, Anastasia Gudz-Chornovol, is opposed to the activities of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate in Cherkassy. “In this, the third year of the war, this is scandalous. Our people’s tolerance simply knows no bounds, but we’ve

had enough, we’re losing patience,” explained Anastasia.

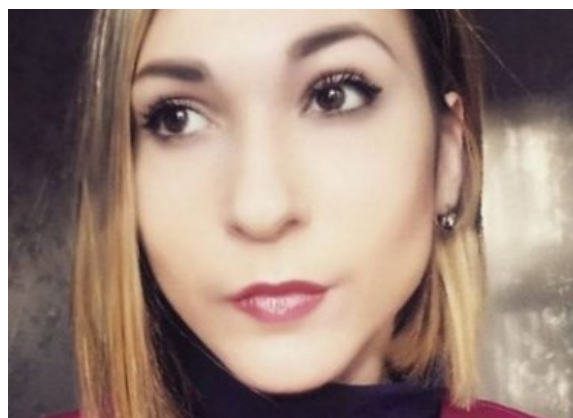
Russia: Detained Ukrainian journalist Viktoriya Roshchyna must be released

Source: *International Federation of Journalists*

(May 30, 2024) Russia’s Ministry of Defence confirmed, on May 27, that it has detained Ukrainian investigative journalist Viktoriya Roshchyna (pictured). She had been reported missing while reporting in the Russian-occupied territory in August last year. Along with our affiliate, the National Union of Journalists of Ukraine (NUJU), the International and European Federations of Journalists (IFJ-EFJ) condemn the arrest of Roshchyna and urge the Russian authorities to immediately and unconditionally release her.

According to a letter dated April 17, 2024 received by Roshchyna’s father from the Russian military police, the Ukrainian investigative journalist is currently being detained in Russia. Her father shared the letter with the NUJU and contacted the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which confirmed that she had been detained but said they had not been able to contact her.

As [reported](#) by local media, Roshchyna left Ukraine for Poland on July 27, 2023 and later planned to travel to eastern Ukraine through Russia before she disappeared on August 3. In the last communication from her, she said that she had been going through border checks for several days, but did not say where she was.



Since the start of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Roshchyna has carried out extensive reporting on the conflict in multiple Ukrainian media outlets, including broadcaster Hromadske, the online newspaper *Ukrainska Pravda*, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL).

In April 2024, the IFJ recorded four journalists injured by Russian drone attacks in the Ukrainian regions of Kharkiv and Zaporizhzhia, with some of them seriously injured and taken to hospital. In January 2024, [BBC Russia](#) reported that thousands of Ukrainian civilians (including journalists) in Russian custody were being held without charge, trial, or access to legal counsel.

The NUJU demanded that the Russian authorities immediately release Roshchyna and other illegally arrested journalists. “Unfortunately, we do not know the details of Viktoriia’s whereabouts. She is deprived of any opportunities for legal protection or communication with others. But the fact that Russia has officially recognised its responsibility for the fate of Ukrainian journalist Viktoriia Roshchyna gives us hope that she will be released,” said the President of the NUJU, Sergiy Tomilenko, to the IFJ and EFJ.

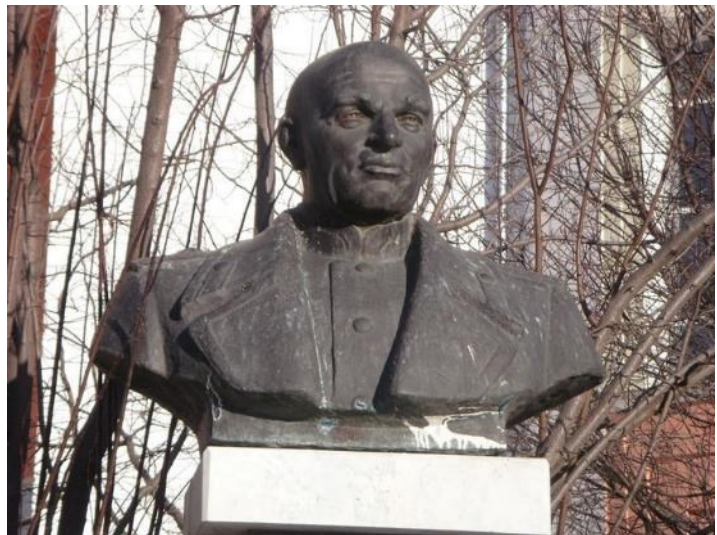
The IFJ and EFJ expressed their deep concern about the lack of press freedom and lack of protection of journalists in the Russian-controlled Ukrainian war zones. “We stand in full solidarity with Viktoriia Roshchyna and with all journalists who are under relentless pressure from the Kremlin,” said the IFJ-EFJ. “We demand their unconditional release.”

For more information, please contact IFJ on +32 2 235 22 16

Crimea: Russian occupiers have demolished the monument to Piotr Grigorenko

Source: Kharkiv Human Rights Protection Group

(May 25, 2024) A monument (pictured) to Ukrainian dissident and human rights activist General [Piotr Grigorenko](#), erected in 1999 in Simferopol on the initiative of the [Mejlis](#) [council] of the Crimean Tatar people and with the support of the People’s Movement of Ukraine, has been destroyed. The deputy chairman of the Mejlis, İlmi Ümerov, explained that the monument had disappeared: “They probably removed it the day before May 18 [anniversary of Stalin’s 1944 deportation of the Crimean Tatars]. It wasn’t in a very visible place and people couldn’t notice it.”



The independent Russian publication *Astra* reported that the monument had been dismantled on May 13. Piotr Grigorenko was a human rights defender and a founding member of the Moscow and Helsinki groups in Ukraine. He was described as “the only general of the human rights movement”. He helped the Crimean Tatars in their struggle to return home. “They [the occupiers] are worried about everything: Ukrainian schools, Ukrainian classes, the Ukrainian language, even a general.... They are destroying everything Ukrainian. The Ukrainian schools have completely disappeared, the Crimean Tatar schools have remained, but in a different form. These are schools for Crimean Tatars with Russian being taught,” said İlmi Ümerov.

Solidarity with Ukraine's workers and unions

'Fighting for social rights even in times of war': German trade union conference on Ukraine a complete success

Source: <https://intersoz.org/>

By Angela, Hermann, Justin and Wilfried



(June 13, 2024)

This event focused on the dismantling of social rights, in particular labour rights, in Ukraine and on debt relief. In addition, the aim was to develop concrete projects for

cooperation between activists from Germany and Ukraine. The concept of the event was widely praised, and the number of participants could have been even larger if a large demonstration against Alternative for Germany (AfD), held after the Ukraine event had been planned, had not taken place at the same time, in the run-up to the European elections,

Among those invited were the partners that a delegation from the [“Solidarity with Ukrainian Trade Unions”](#) initiative had met in Kiev and Kryvyi Rih in October 2023. These included trade unionists from ArcelorMittal, the largest steelworks in Ukraine, and the Be Like Nina initiative. We were also pleased to welcome an activist from the student union Prijama Dija (Direct Action) from Lviv.

[Read on](#)

[See conference video here](#)

Frederic Ebert Foundation conference: Resilience, Reconstruction, Prosperity— Perspectives for Ukraine's Economy

Source: *FES Global*



NOTE: This conference was not addressed by trade unionists but by [Yulia Svyrydenko](#), the Ukrainian First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Economy and [Svenja Schulze](#), the German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development.

[See conference video here](#)



Ukraine Libre—Toulouse

Source: French committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

May 30, 2024) Much of our association's work is invisible to outsiders. Nevertheless, every day our volunteers work on their projects and take them forward.

We'd like to show you our great humanitarian aid team, who collect, tidy up, sort, drop off and then, miraculously, there's a load and the 18-tonne lorry leaves for Ukraine.

Stay with us!

Support our actions with your presence and your donations.

👉 Kitty

<https://urlz.fr/1l2J>

#ukraine #toulouse #ukraine #StandWithUkraine

Yonne: Ukraine Solidarity 89 sends a humanitarian convoy

Source: French committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine

On Wednesday, May 29, 2024, the Ukraine solidarité 89 association sent a lorry loaded with twenty tonnes of food, hygiene and medical products to Ukraine. The 70 m³ convoy contains foodstuffs, hygiene and care products, pet food and medical equipment such as wheelchairs, mattresses and clothing. All these items have been collected thanks to collections organised in local supermarkets over the last four months, and the support of various sponsors.



Oleksi, a Ukrainian driver, will drive the lorry 3000 km over four days to Kryvyi Rih, a town emblematic of Ukrainian resistance. Part of the load will also go to a reception centre in Kropyvnytsky, run by a Ukrainian MP whose sister and niece are staying in Saint-Georges-sur-Baulche. Since the beginning of the conflict, around three hundred Ukrainians have found refuge in the [Yonne](#).

Although the initial outpouring of support seems to have diminished, motivation and generosity remain significant. "People remain sensitive to the cause. They understand that there is a population that is suffering enormously," says Denis Hacq, Chairman of Ukraine Solidarité 89.

Candidates' Ukraine pledge for the July 4 UK general election

Source : *Ukraine Solidarity Campaign (England and Wales)*



#HelpUkraineWin

As a Member of Parliament I will support:

1. GIVING UKRAINE WEAPONS TO WIN
2. STOP MOD SELLING OFF MILITARY HARDWARE
3. JUSTICE FOR RUSSIAN WAR CRIMES
4. CANCEL UKRAINE'S DEBT & SEIZE RUSSIAN ASSETS
5. SOCIALLY PROGRESSIVE RECONSTRUCTION

Call on your Candidates to support these five steps to Help Ukraine Win!

Web: ukrainsolidaritycampaign.org Email: info@ukrainsolidaritycampaign.org

Ukraine: International Trade Union Confederation solidarity

Source: *ITUC*

(May 21, 2024) An ITUC delegation led by General Secretary Luc Triangle has been in Ukraine to reaffirm the global trade union movement's support of workers and their unions in the country.

The group included Christy Hoffman (General Secretary UNI-Global Union), Atle Hoie (General Secretary, IndustriALL Global Union) and Paul Nowak (General Secretary TUC-UK).

Luc Triangle said: "We are in Ukraine to reaffirm that we all stand in full solidarity with the Ukrainian people.... [Read on here](#)



[Video: Ivanna Khrapko, youth officer of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine \(FPU\), on the needs of workers in the Ukraine's war of self-defence](#)

Source: *Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, Scotland*

Candidates' Ukraine pledge for the July 4 UK general election

Source: Ukraine Solidarity Campaign, Scotland

General Election 2024

#HelpUkraineWin

Time for Change to Help Ukraine Win, on 4 July start making it a reality

The General election on 4th July takes places at time of growing pressure on Ukraine with mounting Russian offensives and increased attacks on civilians, the situation has been made worse by the months of delays and obstruction of much needed aid.

The Kremlin is seeking to exploit this situation to weaken belief in continued international support. Ukraine is at a crossroads and with it the fate of this key battle for democracy with the new authoritarianism.

The outcome of the General election is an opportunity for change, the Ukraine Solidarity Campaign is writing to you as a Parliamentary Candidate to support five steps that a future government can take can to help Ukraine win and secure a just peace. We are asking candidates to sign up to support the following:

1 WEAPONS TO WIN

We urgently need a change from providing Ukraine with enough weapons to resist the Russian invasion to sufficient weapons to enable Ukraine to win the war and end the occupation. For a major increase in military aid including tanks, aircraft, artillery, air-defence and mine breaching equipment.

2 STOP SELLING OFF MILITARY HARDWARE

End the Ministry of Defence policy of selling and auctioning off military vehicles and aircraft, that could instead be donated to Ukraine. All the military equipment due to be replaced, including the remaining Challenger 2 Tanks, Scimitar light tanks, Warrior Vehicles and Typhoon Tranche 1 aircraft due to leave service, should be gifted to Ukraine.

3 JUSTICE FOR WAR CRIMES

War crimes on a scale unseen in Europe since World War Two are being committed in Ukraine by the Russian state, which is waging a war of aggression against a sovereign nation under threat of genocide. Urgent steps should be taken to convene an international war crimes tribunal to hold the Russian leaders and military to account for these crimes.

4 CANCEL DEBT & SEIZE RUSSIAN ASSETS

Ukraine's mounting debts should be cancelled and the demand for repayments waived to aid the country's resistance and post-war recovery. All frozen Russian assets held in the UK, both individual and Russian banks to be confiscated and redistributed to Ukraine.

5 SOCIALLY PROGRESSIVE RECONSTRUCTION

Ukraine deserves a just and socially progressive reconstruction in which trade unions and civil society can democratically participate. International support should help to restore and expand universal healthcare, education, rebuild affordable housing and public infrastructure, and ensure decent jobs and working conditions. No more aid from the UK Government should be used for attacks on trade union and labour rights.

Please write to Parliamentary Candidates in your constituency asking them to support these five steps to help ensure Ukraine can win.



uscsc@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/uscscotland>

Ukraine: solidarity and challenges in the nuclear sector amidst invasion

Source: *IndustriALL*

(May 22, 2024) In *industriALL*'s virtual International Nuclear Workers' Unions' Network (INWUN) meeting, affiliates came together to discuss developments and challenges in the sector. The main topic was the conflict in Ukraine where unions are faced with deteriorating working conditions amidst the ongoing struggle for safety due to the Russian invasion.

"We extend our deepest gratitude to the participants of this meeting, including representatives from *IndustriALL* Global and all trade unions from around the world for your support and solidarity with Ukraine," said Valery Matov, *IndustriALL* co-chair for the nuclear sector and vice president of Ukrainian union Atomprofspilka.



Zaporizhzhia nuclear power plant

Ukrainian trade unions are grappling with the loss of territories, facilities and people due to the ongoing conflict.

"The UN Security Council has highlighted that the world is witnessing the most armed conflicts since WWII. Despite this, the UN has not expelled Russia from the Security Council, and the International Labour Organisation continues to cooperate with Russia. As of May 17, 2024, Ukraine has lost 30 per cent of its economy, 20 per cent of its territory, and 3.5 million jobs due to the Russian aggression. Russia's targeting of Ukraine's energy sector is further exacerbating the crisis," Valery continued.

Kemal Ozkan, *IndustriALL* assistant general secretary, highlighted that with Russia's continued attacks on critical infrastructure, which caused significant damage and disruption in March, the global union community has been actively increasing pressure on international bodies. Nuclear unions worldwide are committed and supporting Ukrainian's workers.

"Mobilising the international governance system remains crucial to maintaining this pressure. Findings from an independent mission have confirmed consistent attacks on infrastructure, and we expect the ILO to play a key role in mobilising global governance," said Özkan.

Casper Edmonds from the ILO emphasised the profound suffering inflicted on Ukraine by the Russian aggression. He noted that Russia's actions violate the UN Charter and international law, and oppose the ILO's mission to promote peace and social justice.

Edmonds highlighted the dire conditions faced by Ukrainian workers at Russian-occupied nuclear plants, working under threats to prevent nuclear disasters.

“Their bravery is commendable. The ILO’s commitment to establishing an office in Kyiv signifies a proactive approach to ensuring a rights-based reconstruction of Ukraine, working closely with international partners.”

Trade unions in the nuclear sector from Argentina, France, Japan, Spain, the UK, and the United States provided an overview of the challenges and developments they face. They highlighted the struggle with transitioning to new energy sources while ensuring workers are considered, especially under conservative governments in Argentina and the UK. The discussions confirmed that much work remains to ensure workers are consulted and involved in all developments. The trade unions expressed their strong support and solidarity with the Ukrainian people, were deeply appalled by the situation in Ukraine.

[During the ITUC mission to Kyiv on May 14-15](#), the global solidarity with Ukrainian colleagues was evident. Representatives from ITUC, IndustriALL, UNI global union and the TUC-UK all express that the courage and resilience of Ukrainian unions in these challenging times are commendable.

Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO): ‘A trade union movement at war needs all our support’



(May 16, 2024) “Solidarity in practice,” says LO leader Peggy Hessen Følsvik about LO’s recent trip to Ukraine. A long-standing contact and LO’s support for the Ukrainian labour movement is now being taken a step further.

Over the course of four days in May, the LO leader travelled to Lviv together with three union leaders and the head of LO’s international department (pictured with Ukrainian unionists).

The aim of the trip was to hand over equipment and vehicles to the fighters at the front, to show solidarity with trade union comrades in a demanding time, and to take the cooperation between Norwegian and Ukrainian trade unions one step further.

“Russia’s war against Ukraine is a war against democracy. A war against freedom, democracy and self-determination. A war against the values of the labour movement. That’s why we at LO stand together in solidarity with Ukraine,” says Peggy Hessen Følsvik.

In Lviv, LO’s delegation met the leadership of the two Ukrainian national trade union organisations. During the meeting, it was reported that the trade union movement is in full war mode.

–“Many union representatives have been sent to the front. Those who are not soldiers have the job of serving at the front, caring for the injured and organising funerals,” says Liv Tørres, head of LO’s international department.

“The trade union movement’s resources are used for completely different things than industrial action, in a country where at least four million people are internally displaced and the humanitarian needs are great.

The pressure on the trade union movement is enormous. Two years after the Russian invasion began, around five million jobs have been lost, 26 per cent of the country’s territory is under occupation and the population has been reduced from 42 to around 27 million. The trade union movement has seen a halving of its membership. Women and the elderly have taken over many of the roles and jobs that the men left behind when they went off to war.

Workplace safety has also deteriorated as waterworks, power lines, communications and power plants are continually bombed to pieces. Pressure on wages has also increased in parallel with the war and with pressure on labour legislation and the trade union movement.

Respect for labour rights and ILO conventions is important to ensure sustainable development and reconstruction. At the same time, this will be crucial for Ukraine’s application for EU membership. Therefore, the restoration of respect for labour rights is absolutely essential.

Close cooperation with the Ukrainian labour movement

Tørres explains that LO has built closer cooperation with the Ukrainian labour movement in recent years.

“LO has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the Ukrainian trade union movement in the preparation of a common position at the Congress of European Trade Unions, and we invited them to our congress in 2022,” says Tørres: “Over the years, we have built up a broad network of contacts and a good network. We have allocated millions to their humanitarian work. Supported their political positions. And now we’re forging closer ties through cooperation agreements with both national organisations in Ukraine.”

The Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (FPU) is by far the largest national organisation with almost 5 million members before the war started. The federation of free, independent trade unions is united in the national organisation KVPU with around 200,000 members before the war.

“LO signed co-operation agreements with both FPU and KVPU during the visit to Ukraine. The aim of the agreements is to ensure cooperation on international issues where we have common interests, as well as to assist the Ukrainian trade union movement in priority areas for them in their current situation.

“We will co-operate on political issues where we have common interests internationally. And we will do our best to help strengthen the negotiation system and tripartite work, as well as contributing in relation to labour legislation, vocational training and gender equality, etc.”

“Crisis management as well as the subsequent reconstruction and reconciliation process will be best where the trade union movement is represented in the dialogue and negotiations and involved in finding solutions,” says Peggy Hessen Følsvik.

Shareholders’ meeting shaken by protest: ‘Fluxys sponsors the Russian war effort’

Source: *Bond Beter Leefmilieu, Belgian Committee of the European Network for Solidarity with Ukraine*



This visual is a montage by [Vredesactie](#) based on a photo of the facilities in the port of Zeebrugge specially built for the transhipment of Russian LNG.

(May 15, 2024) At [Fluxys Belgium](#)’s Annual General Meeting on May 14, critical shareholders put their questions to the company’s Board of Directors. The Belgian organisations Vredesactie, Bond Beter Leefmilieu and Greenpeace were not the only ones to take the floor. Ukrainian representatives from Kiev-based Razom We Stand and Brussels-based Promote Ukraine also took the floor. Outside, activists from Vredesactie and Extinction Rebellion protested. They denounced the company’s total lack of attention to large-scale human rights violations in its value chain. They also called on the Chairman to stop abusing his dual role to undermine EU sanctions on the transhipment of Russian liquefied natural gas.

Fluxys sponsors Russian war chest

Shortly after Russia’s annexation of Crimea in 2014, Fluxys signed a 20-year contract with Russian gas company Yamal LNG. In doing so, the company sealed a structural cooperation with a bellicose regime. Fluxys’ direct trading partners are also playing an active role in the Russian offensive, according to the alternative report published by Vredesactie. Svitlana Romanko, founder and director of the Razom We Stand association, says: “The Kremlin benefits enormously from exclusive access to Fluxys’ largest storage tank in Zeebrugge, which was specially built for Russia. In 2023 alone, Russian revenues from cooperation with Fluxys would exceed €1 billion, double the amount of Belgian aid to Ukraine over the past two years. Fluxys’ complicity goes beyond business

and contributes directly to Putin's war chest and the deaths of countless innocent people in Ukraine".

Fluxys' 285-page annual report mentions the sustainability analysis it conducted in 2023, which included examining the value chain for human rights abuses. However, the humanitarian impact in Ukraine does not feature, nor do violations in other countries from which Belgium imports gas, as Greenpeace Belgium raised earlier this year. "Human rights violations in Fluxys' value chain are commonplace. How credible is Fluxys' sustainability report if even the most egregious violations are swept under the carpet? Without a serious human rights framework, Fluxys is doomed to continue supporting violence and oppression, for example in Egypt or Oman, where the group is now moving into hydrogen production", said Mathieu Soete, Campaign Director for Energy Transition at Greenpeace.

Political will in Europe and at federal level, but not in Flanders

At federal level, there is finally unanimity: the problematic relationship between Fluxys and the Russian gas industry must come to an end. The Minister for Energy, Tinne Van der Straeten (Greens), has been mandated to argue at European level for sanctions on the transshipment of Russian gas, which the European Commission took up last week in its proposal for a 14th package of economic sanctions against Russia. It is now up to the Member States to approve this proposal unanimously.

But without the support of the regions, Belgium will have to abstain at European level. And therein lies the rub: at the Flemish parliamentary committee on foreign policy, all the parties in the Flemish regional government voted against a resolution supporting a ban on Russian gas in European ports. This despite the fact that Christian Democrat and Flemish (CD&V) and Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats (Open VLD) supported the ban at federal level. However, it was the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA) that came out on top, using sophistry to avoid supporting the resolution.

The N-VA's sophisms and Andries Gryffroy's double-hatting

According to Karl Vanlouwe (N-VA), a European ban on the transshipment of Russian LNG "would lead to a significant increase in prices and have a huge impact on purchasing power". However, the federal government's initiative relates only to LNG transshipment and not to imports. "Over the last two years, more than 90% of the volumes transhipped have been shipped to non-European markets. The part that remains in the European Union represents less than 0.3% of total gas demand in Europe and is therefore negligible. By way of comparison, a cold winter can increase European gas demand by more than 5%," said Angelos Koutsis, energy expert at Bond Beter Leefmilieu.

Nor is there any reason to fear an impact on the global LNG market. According to reports by IEEFA (an American think tank) and ACER (the Agency for the Cooperation of Energy Regulators), the market will be flooded with LNG from the end of this year, while European demand for gas has been falling for several years and will continue to fall as a result of the energy transition. "A basic understanding of economics tells us that gas prices do not rise in a market where demand is falling and supply is rising," said Mr Koutsis.

Those who stand to lose out in the event of a ban on the transshipment of Russian LNG are Fluxys. This raises questions about the firm stance taken by the N-VA, the party where Fluxys chairman Andries Gryffroy is active as a Flemish MP and energy expert, on this issue. "Political representation is linked to the fact that Belgian towns and municipalities own 77% of Fluxys, but there is always the question of whether there is a conflict of interest on the part of the chairman. Is

Gryffroy representing the public interest on the Fluxys board or is he and his party defending Fluxys' financial interests in the Flemish Parliament?" asks Mattijs Van den Bussche, campaigner at Vredesactie.

Is Flanders choosing human rights?

Fluxys has been saying for two years that it will comply immediately with European sanctions if they are imposed. Now that the European Commission—at the instigation of the Belgian federal government among others—has actually made a proposal to that effect, Andries Gryffroy—in his capacity as chairman of Fluxys—is once again blowing hot and cold. However, as a Flemish MP, he and his party are undermining the proposal for European sanctions outright.

For the organisations, it's time for the Flemish government to show its colours: will it continue to undermine the EU ban on transshipment of Russian LNG with spurious arguments for the financial gain of one company? Or does the Flemish government value human rights and support these much-needed sanctions, which could put an end to the funding of pointless, large-scale wars?

European Public Service Union President in Ukraine



EPSU President, Mette Nord (left) with Roman Balukh, chairman of Lviv Regional Organisation of State Employees of Ukraine (right) and Vasyl Andreiev, vice-president of the Federation of Trade Unions of Ukraine (centre)

Source: EPSU

(16 May 2024) The President of the European Public Service Union (EPSU), Mette Nord, was in Lviv in Ukraine and had meetings with Roman Balukh, chairman of Lviv Regional organisation of state employees of Ukraine. They talked about the challenges the union and workers faced in safeguarding members' trade union rights, while the war is raging.

Mette was part of a delegation with several Norwegian trade union leaders to Ukraine. The unions delivered cars, equipment and humanitarian aid to the Ukrainian organisation and authorities. The

occasion was used for a cooperation agreement between the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO) and the Ukrainian trade union movement.

Mette's visit was disturbed by air-raid alarms as Russian rockets came in and air defence worked. The delegation and Ukrainian people had to take shelter.

She stated: "The most important thing now is to help Ukraine win this war. But as soon as the war is over, we must ensure that the trade union movement can be an important part of the reconstruction of the country." Cooperation between employers, workers and the unions, and authorities is crucial if it is to succeed, Mette Nord added.

Worker struggles in Belarus



- [Closed court hearing of the trade union leader Volha Brytsikava's case to take place in Vitsebsk](#)
- [Demands to release Belarusian unionists in front of the UN headquarters in Geneva \(pictured\)](#)
- [112th International Labour Conference examines violations of workers' rights in Belarus](#)
- [ILO ran a High-Level Round Table on violations of workers' rights in Belarus](#)
- [Political prisoner Aliaksandr Gashnikau faces harsher sentence](#)
- [Palina Sharenda-Panasiuk is yet again accused of disobeying administration of her penitentiary](#)