

Resolution Nr. 1 proposed by the UNI Europa Commerce Steering Committee

Commerce: in a new world of work

The European Commerce Sector (retail and wholesale services) employs nearly 33 million people. It is dominated by a number of large multinationals, but small and informal economy businesses are also overwhelmingly found. More than 95 percent of retail in Europe is from small companies, with fewer than 10 employees. But over 60 percent of retail workers are employed by larger companies which generate about 70 percent of value added and therefore will continue to set trends that impact the industry. The European retail industry also plays a critical role in providing jobs for women and young people, including first time entrants to the labour market.

The retail sector is constantly changing and innovating. The changes currently brought about by new technologies, new business models and the Internet are fundamentally reshaping the industry. The rise of e-commerce is another factor, and despite a decline in purchasing power across Europe, the retail sector is expected to expand over the next decade and to create more than 4 million new jobs while more than 17 million existing positions will need to be filled due to replacement needs. The increasing use of new technology and digital services allows companies to replace medium-skilled employees earning medium-wages with low-skilled and low-wage labour. Therefore, jobs are more and more created at the two extreme ends of the wage distribution with low skills, repetitive and monotonous tasks at the lower end versus highly specialised and knowledge-based positions at the high end. UNI Europa Commerce and our affiliates must find a way to both keep new jobs from being further deskilled, and provide training and opportunities to meet the demand for new types of jobs. Therefore it is very important that UNI Europa Commerce can campaign to, and support affiliates in delivering more stability and decent work in the workplace, by supporting the organisation and representation of workers in the collective bargaining process. UNI Europa Commerce also have to act to support urgent public and private investment for good, safe, full-time sustainable jobs to achieve social, economic and environmental outcomes of value to society. Commerce workers across Europe are facing difficult times. Low pay, and the casualisation of employment, through the exploitative use of zero and short-hours contracts, and generally insecure working conditions, are rife. This has an adverse impact, not only on workers' living standards, but on their mental health and family relationships and on their overall work-life balance.

UNI Europa Commerce Global Union aims to achieve decent working conditions for all workers in the commerce sector by building the organisational strength of unions to negotiate strong collective agreements and developing dialogue between unions and companies on all levels.

Organising workers at their workplace is the cornerstone of the work of UNI Europa Commerce and its affiliates, thereby increasing density levels and thus union bargaining power.

Assisting retail workers who are often at pains to achieve a healthy work-life-balance because of the very long and flexible working hours and unpredictable rostering is an excellent way to promote union organising.

To do all this important work, we have to ensure that all affiliates are committed and that the UNI Europa Commerce secretariat has the economic and staff resources needed to fulfil the work program decided by the conference.

UNI Europa Commerce and its affiliates will together develop and implement the following actions:

UNI Europa Commerce ensure that decent work is made a legislative priority at national and European level by setting clear policies, led by affiliates and taking their first-hand knowledge of the current issues into account, that meet the challenges created by modern workplace practices. Key projects will be agreed and followed through, with regular reviews to ensure their effectiveness.

More specifically, and in order to achieve the main objective above, UNI Europa Commerce will,

- Collect and share research and best practices from affiliates, EU institutions and its agencies (Eurostat, Eurofund etc) and national research institutes on working and employment conditions; new forms of work; e-commerce; franchising; new technologies; training and skills development; health and safety in workplaces and collective bargaining. Develop strategies to prevent a further deskilling of new jobs, to stop a polarisation among low skilled and high skilled workers and to promote equality between men and women.
- Encourage its affiliates to ensure that the large membership of women, migrant and young workers is reflected in the union's leadership.
- Together with UNI Europa and the European trade union movement, campaign for living wages for everyone in all sectors, supply chains and geographical locations either by collective agreement or law.