

How Decent are Working Conditions in Europe?

solidar

decent work 
decent life





Do vulnerable groups (young people, migrants) who work in sectors with high rates of precarious work have access to decent work?



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1. FEMALE MIGRANT CAREGIVER, ITALY

Many families in Italy are now turning to foreign assistance to care for their elderly relatives. Pay levels vary, with nearly half of the family assistants earning between €600-800 per month. 50% have to stay at their workplace day and night, and a third do not have their own room. Despite a National Collective Agreement concluded in 2007 that recognises the status of caregivers, increases the minimum wage, defines working hours and fixed paid time off, challenges to decent working conditions still persist.



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2. "RETIRED GARBAGE RECYCLER, ROMANIA

Floarea Furdui, a former sanitation employee, is still working although she is retired. She collects PET plastic bottles from the Prahovza river bed, sorts and sells them. Rocketing consumption and Romania's joining the EU have turned waste recycling into an activity which to some is the only means to a basic subsistence.



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3. MIGRANT CONSTRUCTION WORKER, ITALY

“Only at the end I told him, Mauro (employer) please give me this money. I don’t have money to make ends meet; I worked even during the holidays, everybody left and I worked and you didn’t pay September, you didn’t pay October, and how can I live without money? ‘I’ll pay you tomorrow, I’ll pay you tomorrow’, he kept saying. He didn’t pay me for three months and then he told me he didn’t have to.” B., Romanian, construction worker.



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4. SCRAP METAL COLLECTORS, ROMANIA

The unemployed in the town of Zlatna earn a living by selling the iron they take out from the walls of a large decommissioned iron ore plant. After a full day's labour, one person can get 25-35 RON (€6-8.5) selling iron to collection centres. The legal minimum wage in Romania on 1 January 2009 was 600 RON (about €150).



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5. PENSIONER FACTORY WORKER, LITHUANIA

Working pensioners will face reductions in their pensions based on their earnings in a measure to encourage them to leave the labour market and make way for younger workers. In 2009, the trade unions opposed the Government's proposal for the Employment Contracts Act - to make cuts in the public budget at the expense of workers, employees and pensioners - but the government went ahead regardless despite a previous agreement reached in 2008 with trade unions and employers.



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6. BRICKMOULDER GYPSY CHILDREN, ROMANIA

Brickmoulders are gypsies who are very proud of their craft they've inherited from their forefathers, passed down from one generation to another. Children work too and they usually skip school. They attend it only as much as they need to be entitled to state benefits. Three children and a grandmother are hurrying up to mould the last bricks of the day.



7. YOUNG COAL MINERS, ESTONIA

Young people are particularly at risk of poverty and social exclusion because of the effects of the economic crisis: those with short employment history are the cheapest and easiest to lay off. The result is that unemployment in Estonia has doubled within two years to one of the highest levels in Europe.



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8. FEMALE GYPSY BRICKMOULDERS, ROMANIA

Brickmoulders are gypsies who are very proud of the craft they've inherited from their forefathers, passed down from one generation to another. Women work as hard as men do. Their employers allow them to work on their sites in exchange for a certain amount of money per brick or for a share of the final production. They do not have employment contracts or health insurance.



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9. GARBAGE RECYCLER KID, ROMANIA

A child is looking through a dump in Zarnesti, Romania, to see if he could collect materials to sell to collection centres. In keeping with the latest EU regulations on environmental protection, this dump has been closed.



10. "GOVERNMENT SHOULD COMPLY WITH AGREEMENTS" BANNER, ESTONIA

The Government of Estonia revised the Employment Contracts Act in 2009 but after an initial tripartite agreement and a change in the employment situation due to the economic crisis, the Estonian Government introduced changes unilaterally to the text. Workers and trade unions clearly feel that the new agreement does not provide them with the security they need, in terms of compensation or training, and therefore does not provide conditions for decent work.