

TRANSPORT WORKERS FIGHTING BACK

ORGANISING GLOBALLY

Fatigue

“Fatigue Kills!” was the original slogan for the ITF international road transport campaign and this issue remains a serious problem.

In September 2005, the ILO, after consultation with the ITF, produced a working paper on “The issues of fatigue and working time in the road transport sector”. The paper refers to the many serious issues in road transport and the conclusions identify the relation between fatigue, hours of work and the demands of the industry for cheap and fast delivery. The ILO paper also acknowledges the on-going campaign by the ITF and its affiliates on “fatigue kills” and expresses its support to the International Action Week.

“We have raised the issues of drivers’ fatigue quite substantially to the public and media through our campaign. The media can now cite the possibility of driver’s fatigue in an accident, whereas in the past they would say the cause was ‘unknown’ or ‘still under investigation’.”
(ver.di, Germany)

ILO Convention 153

One of our key demands for road transport workers as part of the Action Week is to limit working time to a maximum of 48 hours per week, in line with ILO Convention 153, which concerns hours of work and rest periods in road transport. It is the only ILO Convention that deals exclusively with conditions in road transport.

The main clauses of the Convention state that:

- Every driver is entitled to a break after 4 hours continuous driving or after 5 hours continuous work.
- The maximum daily total driving time should not exceed 9 hours.
- The maximum weekly driving time should not exceed 48 hours.
- The daily rest period must never be less than 8 consecutive hours.

The Convention so far has been ratified by nine countries – Ecuador, Iraq, Mexico, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, Uruguay and Venezuela. However, most of these countries have taken no measures to ensure the implementation of the Convention.

Can trade unions in these countries lobby their governments during the Action Week to ensure that the Convention is properly implemented through national legislation?

Can trade unions elsewhere bring pressure on their governments to ratify and implement the Convention?

UN Decade of Action on Road Safety (2011-2020)

In 2011, the United Nations (UN) launched a 'Decade of Action for Road Safety' with the aim of stabilising and then reducing global road deaths by 2020. For the ITF, improving the social conditions for professional drivers is essential in order to promote road safety. It is important that the focus of this UN campaign will not be limited to the purely technical factors affecting road safety such as the use of seatbelts, effective speed management, and the design of safer roads. The ITF would like to see the objectives of achieving limits on drivers' hours and improving drivers' conditions through the provision of adequate rest facilities, etc.

It is essential that trade unions are included in the national programmes of the UN campaign to promote road safety strategies, but also to lead the work in some areas such as social issues that affect professional drivers. Please visit http://www.who.int/roadsafety/decade_of_action/en/ for more information.

Fatigue Kills!

There are many warning signs for fatigue. A combination of any of the following signals shows that the driver is becoming fatigued:

- yawning
- eyes feeling sore or heavy
- vision starting to blur
- start seeing things
- daydreaming and not concentrating
- becoming impatient
- feeling hungry or thirsty
- reactions seem slow
- feeling stiff or cramped
- driving speed creeps up or down
- starting to make poor gear changes
- wandering over the centre line or onto the road edge

[Australian Transport Safety Bureau]

When you notice some of these warning signs, you are advised to take a break.

The efforts of the individuals are, however, limited.

A trade union can negotiate better conditions collectively with your employer.