

Estonian Unions Turn Back Anti-Worker Revisions to Country's Labour Code

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[作者] International Federation of Chemical,Energy, Mine

[单位] International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine

[摘要] 11 December 2008. Estonian trade unions scored a major victory last week when the country's Parliament accepted all revisions made by the unions to the proposed Employees' Representatives' Act. The legislation, if passed, would have severely weakened trade union protections, including exclusion of union stewards from shop-floor information and consultation processes, and stripping union representatives from unfair dismissal protections.

[关键词] Anti-Worker Revisions,Labour Code

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Instead, during a second reading of the bill on 6 December, the unions successfully inserted language into the proposed new statute calling for shop stewards to be formally characterized as "employee" representatives, with full rights and guarantees, and they must be included in all information and consultation matters over workplace or worker concern. Additionally, amendments to the law will prohibit shop stewards from being discriminated against, and they will retain paid time in the performance of their duties.

A third and final reading of the bill will take place on 13 December, and since procedure disallows further amendments to it, it is certain to be passed this week. The law will take effect in Estonia on 1 February 2009.

Hari Talaja, President of the Estonian national labour centre EAKL, said the statute now conforms to ILO Convention 135, the Workers' Representatives Convention. He said that although the country's labour unions are not entirely happy with the new law, the success they had in rolling back the draconian aspects of the bill is commendable.

Estonian trade unions had the help of Industriörsförbundet i Norden (Nordic IN), the Free-

estonian trade union Federation of chemical, energy, paper, and metal unions, in mounting a campaign against the worst provisions in the bill. "This victory is a result of systematic and intelligent work by the Estonian trade unions," said Nordic IN General Secretary Jyksi Rains, who also credited an international solidarity campaign, as well as timely and effective amendments.

