

Margot Wallström

Vice-President of the European Commission

The EU contribution to decent work throughout the world

*Check Against Delivery
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Call to Action for Decent Work – Decent Life

Brussels, 7 October, 2008

The European Commission is fully aware of the magnitude of the challenge: worldwide, one in two workers has an insecure job. Many of them are in the informal economy, with low pay and dangerous working conditions. And 80 % of workers still do not have adequate social protection.

To promote decent work – meaning more and better jobs, with social protection, social dialogue, and equal opportunities – is just as relevant for developing countries as for emerging economies and industrialised countries.

One point holds true throughout the world: investing in decent work is not only a driver for fairness and justice, but also a move towards better economic performance, more effective public policy, and better governance.

The European Union has the goal of combining economic growth, more and better jobs with social justice. That is why the Commission supports the development of decent work, fair globalisation, and policy coherence also at the international level.

The Commission is a key partner of the International Labour Organisation. Since 2007, all EU Member States have ratified the "core labour standards" set out in the eight fundamental ILO conventions. The Commission has now invited all Member States to ratify and implement also the other Conventions. Leading by example will help the EU's credibility in promoting decent work on the global scene.

There is a growing international interest in the European experience in areas of employment, social policy and equal opportunities.

The EU supports efforts to promote social standards and decent work through our trade policy - for example when we negotiate free trade agreements. And through our external relations and development cooperation we advance the EU's contribution to full and productive employment and decent work.

But the promotion of decent work will not succeed without the support, the commitment, the dedication of organised non-state actors who work with social justice and solidarity.

So, social partners, NGOs and civil society should therefore have an increasingly prominent role in our policies.

We have heard your Call for Action.

The Commission will increase its efforts for decent work. This will benefit women and men, workers and business, both within and outside the EU.

Thank you.