

EU minimum wage required to combat social dumping

Written by Karima Delli on 7 April 2015 in Opinion
Opinion

Karima Delli argues that a lack of minimum working conditions is enabling 'a new form of modern slavery' and 'destroying' jobs.



Social dumping is part of a vicious circle which pits employees against each other and only benefits large companies to the detriment of small businesses. Transport is one of the sectors where fierce competition has been raging due to ferocious rivalry on labour costs and the high mobility of workers.

Since 1999, France alone has lost 21,000 jobs in road transport and hundreds of SMEs have closed. Among the most notorious of the companies refusing to play by the rules are Dentressangle in road transport and Ryanair in air travel.

"There is an urgent need to establish an EU labour inspection agency to monitor and sanction unscrupulous employers"

Sea travel is not spared either and is characterised by the rapid development of a new form of modern slavery, with exploitation of large numbers of undeclared, and frequently illegal workers.

Everybody agrees there is a problem with social dumping in the transport sector. There is an urgent need to establish an EU labour inspection agency to monitor and sanction unscrupulous employers and draw up an EU blacklist of offending companies.

Minimum standards for working conditions and wages are also essential. Now is the right time to introduce an EU minimum wage. Transport sector reforms need to include strengthening the rules around road transportation and clarifying the problematic issue of 'flags of convenience' in the shipping sector.

France and Germany recently amended their laws to ensure that every lorry driver crossing their border are paid the statutory minimum wage for the time spent working in that country. However, we cannot wait for each member state to amend their legislation. It is up to Europe to take responsibility and draft a proposal for a common solution to these issues.

Instead, unfortunately, the European rules currently under construction will only see the strongest survive, with the costs being borne by citizens, working people and consumers.

It is high time to stop this situation spiralling out of control and move towards a different European Union that works for everyone - one which ensures decent working conditions, irrespective of country of origin or nationality.

If we fail to take a stand today, social dumping will continue to destroy jobs and this will threaten the European project itself.

About the author

Karima Delli (Greens/EFA, FR) is a member of parliament's transport and tourism committee

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