

British and Norwegian trade unions demand trade deals secure protections for workers' rights and good jobs

As trade negotiations are underway between our countries, workers in the UK and Norway are united in calling for trade deals that supports a recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic built on decent work, fair wages and the welfare of society.

It is in the interests of all workers that the UK secures a deal with the EU that locks in a high standard of rights. Without this guarantee, the door will be opened for standards to be lowered significantly in the UK which will result in downward pressure elsewhere given the interconnected nature of our economies.

It is crucial for the UK to negotiate a good deal with the EU to ensure ongoing protection of rights, jobs, public services and peace in Northern Ireland. To protect jobs, it is crucial the UK retains as much barrier free and tariff free trade as possible with the EU. And, as a minimum, the rights of UK workers must at least keep pace with those of EU workers.

The TUC and LO call upon our governments to also secure a good free trade deal between the UK and Norway and avoid a no deal situation that will increase hardship for workers in our countries.

To ensure a trade deal between the UK and Norway that promotes the interests of working people, it must contain these elements:

1. An ambitious chapter to enforce commitments to ratify and respect International Labour Organisation core conventions on labour rights and UN Sustainable Development Goals. The TUC and LO will not accept a race to the bottom for workers' rights.
2. Protections for the rights of migrant workers by ensuring any 'Mode 4' and labour provisions contain effectively enforceable obligations for workers' rights to be promoted and respected - this is crucial as our labour markets are strongly interconnected, particularly in the off-shore and on-shore activity in the oil and gas sectors.

3. Protections for the right of governments to use public procurement and state-owned enterprises to support economic development, improve working conditions and pursue social and environmental objectives.
4. Protections for all public services by completely excluding all public services such as health, education and transport; opening public services up to global market forces will not benefit our communities who rely on universal, quality public services that must be run for public benefit – not private profit.
5. Protections for the ability of governments to regulate services in the public interest.
6. Exclusions for all cultural sectors.
7. Protections for the ability of governments to regulate our tax systems and financial services to promote strong public services, reduced inequality, sustainable growth and decent work.
8. Protections for the right of governments to establish and maintain policies necessary to protect consumers and workers through data integrity, security and privacy measures, and prevent the misuse of data for any form of discrimination.
9. Protections for the right of governments to regulate the cross-border flow of data, require companies to have a local presence, access source code and algorithms and maintain privacy and consumer protections to protect public health and prevent discrimination.
10. Exclusions for all kinds of special courts for foreign investors such as Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) or the Investment Court System (ICS), which allow foreign investors to sue governments for actions that threaten their profits.
11. Exclusions for extensions of patent protection or data exclusivity periods for pharmaceutical drugs.
12. Commitments for our governments to support and implement the Paris Agreement and policies to support Just Transition.
13. Expansion of cooperation to combat unfair trade practices including strong antidumping and countervailing duty provisions and prevent circumvention and evasion of action taken.

