



Fighting against precarious jobs - New rights for temporary agency workers

One of the EU's main aims in the field of employment - laid down in the Treaty - is to improve the working conditions of its workers and fight precarious jobs. Yet, despite the huge growth in the number of agency workers, they have been denied many of the rights long guaranteed to most workers; with no right to job security, they have faced precarious conditions and exploitation.

Where we played a leading role

In 2008, the European Parliament adopted legislation brought forward by the Socialist Group, recognizing the right of agency workers across the European Union to equal treatment with workers directly employed in companies. The Socialists had a leading role from start to finish, with the initial proposal drafted by Ieke van den Burg (Dutch) and then final negotiations led by Harlem Désir (French).

Our success

The Socialist Group demanded that agency workers enjoy equal treatment from their first day of employment, while the Council of Ministers wanted the new rights restricted to workers who had been several months on the job. The Council blocked the whole proposal for six years because of disagreements among member states. But after intense pressure from the Parliament and the trade union movement, the Council finally took up the great majority of the Parliament's proposals: most importantly, equal treatment from day 1, with an option for the social partners in individual member states to agree on a limited qualifying period and the inclusion of pay in the definition of general working conditions.

Where others were divided

To overcome a threat of weakening or renewed blockage of the Agency Workers Directive by the Council at the next stage of the legislative procedure, our Group - faced with splits in the EPP & Liberal Groups - pushed the Directive through without amendment. That meant that the Council did not get a second chance to block the Directive and it is now EU law, which must be transposed by the member states into national legislation by 2011.