



profile

Union:
Mining and Metallurgy Trade Union of Kyrgyzstan (MMTUK)

Country:
Kyrgyzstan

Text:
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ORGANIZING IS A WELL-DEFINED PRIORITY IN KYRGYZSTAN

Over last five years IndustriALL Global Union affiliate Mining and Metallurgy Trade Union of Kyrgyzstan (MMTUK) has grown from 15,000 to 27,250 members. The union leadership explains the outstanding results by strong union policies aimed at becoming more attractive to workers.

Trade union activities have three main focuses:

- ▶ Increasing trade union membership in existing organizations
- ▶ Creating new trade union organizations in the sector
- ▶ Expanding the union through mergers with trade unions in other sectors

The chosen strategy is paying off. In the mining and metallurgic sector there is a clear increase in working union members. In 2010, the union organized slightly more than half of everyone employed in the sector; two years later, trade union membership was up to 70.5 per cent. **It has continued to grow reaching 81.6 per cent in 2015, and finally achieving 84.1 per cent of workers employed in the sector in 2017.**

MMTUK is constantly working to improve the appeal for working people to join the union. One important way is spreading information about the union itself, its work and its achievements through mass media, including advertising on radio, television and the internet.

As advertising is expensive, the union created a competition for the best publication promoting MMTUK. The union also promotes its work through stands and banners in the streets, distribution

of flyers, organization of meetings with potential members.

Uniting forces with other unions is another way of growing in strength. In the last five years, there have been two mergers; with the coal mine workers and the geology workers.

For employees of the mobile operator Beeline, strength and a genuine internal democracy were the primary criteria when wanting to set up their own local branch of the MMTUK. This allowed the union to bargain for special tariffs for its members. The preferential mobile plan called “Profsoyuznyi” (for trade unions) became another motivational factor for workers to join MMTUK.

The union has had similar negotiations with banks for a special preferential interest rates on loans issued to trade union members.

“We are growing as a result of the work we are doing – constantly trying to address workers’ needs,” says Eldar Tadzibayev, president of MMTUK. “We provide traditional trade union representation at work through collective bargaining, improving health and safety, protecting workers’ rights and so on. At the same time, the MMTUK also provides additional services like legal support and consulting about issues regarding housing rights and domestic relations.”

The MMTUK is also gaining influence at the national level. In 2012, MMTUK established a national centre for research. The primary goal of the centre is to study and provide research on social and labour relations at both national and international levels, assist in improving working standards and conditions, help in implementing principles for decent work, equality, and respect of human dignity.

The centre is currently working on issues related to labour migration and the shadow economy. It is estimated that only 550,000 people out of the working age population of 2.2 million are officially employed. The centre is developing research on how to change the situation.



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