

COUNTRY PROFILE

CROATIA

Population¹



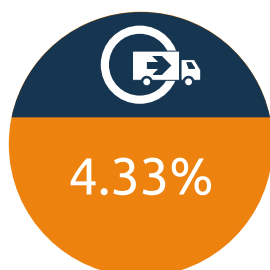
Registered garment enterprises (2018)²



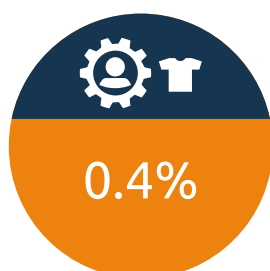
Registered employees in the garment industry (2019)³



Share of garment industry in total export (2019)⁴



Share of garment industry in total GDP (2016)⁵



Total value of garment industry in export was €485,164,611 in period from January till September 2019. Italy and Germany are top export destinations, which together make 55% of total export. This suggests that mostly Italian and German companies source from Croatia, which was confirmed during the field research.

Main export destinations of garments and their values

Italy €187,411,960

Germany €80,710,781

Spain €54,603,159

France €30,244,100

Portugal €15,497,268

Source: Croatian Bureau of Statistics

1 Croatian Bureau of Statistics (CBS), Population estimate, 2018. https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/07-01-03_01_2019.htm
2 CBS, Basic structural business indicators of enterprises, 2018: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/15-01-01_01_2019.htm
3 CBS, Employment – Administrative sources: [https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/Pokazatelj/Zaposlenost i place/Zaposlenost - Administrativni izvori.xlsx](https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/Pokazatelj/Zaposlenost%20i%20place/Zaposlenost-Administrativni%20izvori.xlsx)
4 CBS, Foreign trade in goods of the Republic of Croatia (Jan–Sept 2019 and Jan–Oct 2019): https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/04-02-01_09_2019.htm

5 CBS, data on GDP: <https://tinyurl.com/y4myhd57>
6 CBS, Average monthly gross and net earnings of persons in employment, by sex, 2017: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/09-01-04_01_2019.htm
7 CBS, Wages: <https://tinyurl.com/vn5mleq>
8 Ibid.
9 CBS, Average monthly gross and net earnings of persons in employment, by sex, 2017: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/09-01-04_01_2019.htm

WAGE LADDER CROATIA

€405	Legal minimum net wage (2019)
€418	Average net wage of interviewed workers for a regular 40-hour work week (2019)
€437	Legal minimum net wage (2020)
€440	Average net wage in garment industry for women (2017) ⁶
€446	Average net wage of interviewed workers including overtime and bonuses (2019)
€579	Average net wage in garment industry (2019)
€589	Average net wage in manufacture of leather and related products (2019) ⁷
€618	Average net wage in manufacture of textiles (2019) ⁸
€641	Average net wage in garment industry for men (2017) ⁹
€660	Poverty threshold for a family of four ¹⁰
€868	Average net wage in Croatia ¹¹
€900	Subsistence minimum for a four-person household (2011) ¹²
€1246	Estimated minimum living wage per month according to interviewed workers ¹³

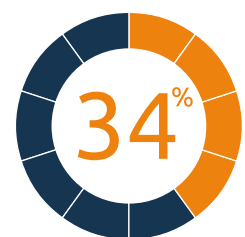
DIFFICULT POSITION OF GARMENT WORKERS

Garment workers in Croatia earn HRK 12,118/EUR 1,631 per year less than the official poverty threshold for a four-person household, and HRK 73,824/EUR 9,936 per year less than the estimated living wage.

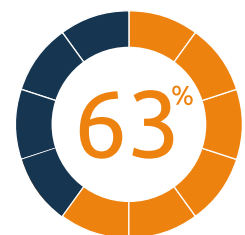
Interviewed workers said that it would be impossible to live only on their salary. Even with the help of a spouse, relatives or older children, they still have to do additional jobs, sometimes moonlighting, some of them grow their own fruit and vegetables, and keep chickens. Also, when asked, workers did not know how much a cinema ticket or a meal in a restaurant would cost. Most of them couldn't remember when was the last time they went for a holiday at the seaside or travelled somewhere outside the place where they lived.

When answering the question "What do you lack the most and think you cannot afford because of low salary and difficult working conditions?" most workers said: quality rest, normal annual leave (minimum two weeks of continuous rest, without getting calls from bosses), vacation outside our place of residence, more family time, salary with which they could afford a normal life. The other workers were indifferent in their answers – some of them said they were used to the situation in which they have nothing.

Share of interviewed workers' net wages in estimated living wage



Share of interviewed workers' wages in the at-risk-of-poverty rate



¹⁰ CBS, First release/Indicators of poverty and social exclusion, 2017: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2018/14-01-01_01_2018.htm

¹¹ CBS, Average monthly net and gross earnings of persons in paid employment for January-December 2019: https://www.dzs.hr/Hrv_Eng/publication/2019/09-01-01_12_2019.htm

¹² Independent Trade Unions of Croatia: <http://www.nhs.hr/gospodarstvo/kosarica/>

¹³ Living wage is a wage earned in a standard working week of no more than 48 hours with which garment workers are able to buy food for themselves and their family, pay the rent, pay for healthcare, clothing, transportation and education and have a small amount of savings for when something unexpected happens. Read more at: <https://cleanclothes.org/living-wages>



CROATIAN GARMENT INDUSTRY

Textile and garment production in Yugoslavia made up a large part of economic sector and Yugoslavia was among the bigger and more important manufacturers of textiles at a global level. In addition to that, it had its own giant factories producing everything from the needle to the sewing machine. However, in the 1990s the situation changed completely. Privatization of factories was carried out during and after the war. What followed was the deindustrialization of ex-YU countries. Also, there had been changes in the global market – China took over the production of textiles and Croatia started importing cheap goods from foreign markets, while at the same time the production for domestic market decreased. The end result was a rise in unemployment, bankruptcy of many domestic factories, a complete loss of factories producing raw materials and a change in the mode of production.

Today over 80% of jobs in the textile industry originate from Lohn production, which means that foreign companies from the economic centre of Europe send pre-cut and tailored parts of products to the periphery countries of production where they are then sewn. Clothing is then sent back and sold on the foreign market. Lohn production is problematic when a country develops complete dependence on foreign partners and loses its own production or takes the cheapest jobs in the chain of global competition. In the last decade many foreign companies came to Croatia with only one aim – to earn money. Some built production plants (so called, greenfield investments), like Calzedonia did in the North-West Croatia and some started to operate in existing plants (brownfield investments), like Benetton in East Croatia. Private investors find

Croatia interesting due to its geographic proximity to the Western European market, reduced transport costs (which are lower than the cost of transportation from third world countries), tax exemption (they don't have to pay customs due to Croatia's membership in the European Union) and skilled, experienced and cheap labour.

The garment industry in Croatia is nowadays reduced to 11,315 workers and fragmented down to 832 registered enterprises, mostly in private ownership. Vast majority of the employees in the garment industry, that is 89 percent (namely, 10,062) are women, who also do most of the housework in their homes. Employers do not invest in the improvement of the workers' know-how and young workers refuse to work for a miserable salary. These are the reasons why 77 percent of the workers employed in the garment industry are between 30 and 54 years old (data from 2017). The lowest wages in total manufacture industry are in Croatia's garment sector. Besides that, workers face frequent violations of their rights, be it those related to benefits and wages, as well as other.

"I work as a controller, I count the eyelets. If the count is not correct, if I make a mistake, that's a big problem. We have a big responsibility, we should be paid more. We are underpaid and it is humiliating."

WAGE THEFT PRACTICES AND WORKERS' RIGHTS VIOLATIONS

- Failure to log overtime hours
- Forced overtime: workers have to work overtime in order to finish the delivery by the stipulated deadline
- Unpaid or inadequately paid overtime
- Travel costs unpaid, partly paid or paid in the form of a voucher to be spent in the factory store
- Malpractice of short-term contracts
- Wage deductions (for sick leave, from salary or from transportation costs)
- No meal allowance, Christmas, Easter or annual leave bonuses
- Difficulties in getting legally guaranteed leave and days off
- Restricted entrance to the factory (until 5 min before the shift starts) and to the factory's cafeteria
- Excessive heat during the summer, which sometimes leads to feelings of exhaustion and nausea and workers fainting
- Dusty and suffocating workplaces, without an air conditioner
- Failure to maintain minimum hygienic conditions – saving on hygienic supplies as toilet paper and soap
- Verbal abuse, disrespectful treatment of workers, intimidation from bosses and supervisors

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE BRANDS

- ! Brands who own the factories in Croatia should invest in them – in the machines, equipment, occupational health and safety and, most importantly, in the workers. This can be done by paying the workers a living wage and respecting the law and dignity of workers.
- ! Brands who order products from Croatian companies should pay higher manufacturing price of their products, so that workers could be paid more.
- ! Brands should be transparent about their supply chain!
- ! Act on the above-mentioned violations.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE CROATIAN GOVERNMENT

- ! Increase the legal minimum wage to the level of living wage.
- ! Increase inspectional supervision and fines for violations of workers' rights.
- ! Develop a strategy focused on the preserving the existing capacities in the textile industry on the national level.

FIELD RESEARCH

In order to investigate working conditions in Croatian garment industry, field research was conducted between August and December 2019. It consisted of interviews with 38 garment workers from four garment factories. The workers interviewed were employees working in various conditions and enterprises, from a factory to a small workshop. The first site was subsidiary of a global brand in which workers operate machines, two were tier 1 suppliers (cut and sew production units) and one was a small workshop producing for domestic market and sewing made-to-measure clothing. In order to ensure the anonymity of workers and to protect them from employers' retaliation it was essential not to disclose the identity of the factories researched. The following pages offer summary of their working conditions, state of their rights, occupational health and safety and organizing in unions – topics tackled in conversations with workers.

According to media publications, published supplier lists, websites of companies or other sources, the following brands and retailers are sourcing from Croatia: Airfield, Alexander Fashion Deluxe, Armani, Benetton, C&A, Calzedonia, Cornelie Weise, Dolce&Gabbana, Elfs, Escada, Eva B. Bitzer, F&S, Fuchs Smitt, Gebrüder Mey, Hugo Boss, Ilja Wisser, J. Lindeberg, Joop!, La Perla, Lei Lou by Alex Dojčinović, Maerz, Missoni, Okmal, Olymp, Pal Zileri, Rena Lange, Rene Lazard, Sisley, Versace, Windsor, Wolford, Zadig&Voltaire.

Hugo Boss, Escada, Windsor, Benetton, Sisley and Olymp are the biggest brands for which workers in factories where the field research was done produce, according to the workers interviewed and the factories' web sites.





SUPPLIER FOR LUXURY BRANDS: HUGO BOSS, ESCADA AND WINDSOR

Workers in this privately owned Croatian company produce women's clothing – blazers, coats, dresses, skirts, and pants primarily for luxury brand Hugo Boss. Despite its Code of Conduct which emphasizes health and safety of its employees and minimum social and labour standards, workers work in poor conditions and are dissatisfied with their situation.

Regular work time is 40 hours per week, which is paid net HRK 3,000/EUR 405, i. e. Croatian minimum wage (as it was regulated in 2019). If workers don't finish the order by the stipulated deadline, they have to work overtime on Saturdays (interviewed workers worked at least two Saturdays per month) or they have to stay 45 minutes to one hour longer during the week, after their regular eight-hour work day has ended. These hours were neither paid nor recorded anywhere, which is an illegal practice, as the Labour Act states that all overtime work has to be paid. Work on Saturdays is paid, but as a "reward", not as "overtime", which is a way the employer manipulates the workers and which allows him to pay whatever amount he wants and evade legal restrictions for allowed number of overtime hours. Additionally, Saturday is paid HRK 140/EUR 19, but because of the lack of public transport during the weekend and after regular working hours, workers have to either wait for a long time for the bus to arrive or use their own car, which is expensive – so almost all the additional money they earn is spent on gas and something to eat. The workers are consequently left with almost nothing. Workers are not refunded for travel expenses when they use their own cars, but those who travel to work by bus get an annual bus ticket.

Workers feel the injustice because of the inequality between their bosses' salaries and their own – the workers can barely survive on a minimum wage although they work very hard, while the bosses drive expensive cars and visit tourist destinations on weekends. One worker mentioned that on one occasion when the workers asked for higher salaries the director told them the following: "The company is not a welfare institution".

Workers have only 20 days of annual leave, but the employer divides 15 days of annual leave in three parts, which is again illegal according to the Labour Act¹⁴ and also one of reasons why the workers cannot rest properly. Most of the interviewed workers prefer to use the remaining five days of annual leave for their health issues, visiting the doctor, etc. They usually do this because when they take sick leave the employer deducts a part of salary – which is completely legal. Act on Mandatory Health Insurance states that a worker's salary during sick leave cannot be less than 70% of the basic salary.¹⁵ Employers exploit this provision to pay only 70%, and to pay less for a few days of sick leave.

Employer in this factory started another practice – he promised rewards in amount of HRK 300/EUR 40 for those workers who would not use their sick leave in a certain period. Rewards were supposed to

"We can't invest in ourselves. I would like to take a language course or go to the theater sometimes. Now I can't even go out and have a coffee with friends as much as I would like to. Our social life suffers."

¹⁴ Labour Act (consolidated text), Article 84. Official Gazette no. 137/2004. http://www.vsrh.hr/CustomPages/Static/HRV/Files/Legislation_Labour-Act.pdf
¹⁵ Act on compulsory health insurance, Art. 55. NN 80/13, 137/13, 98/19 <https://www.zakon.hr/z/192/Zakon-o-obveznom-zdravstvenom-osiguranju>

be paid every three months, but he deceived the workers. He paid them only twice in the last year instead of the planned for installments. Workers refrained from exercising their right of sick leave at the expense of their health, just to earn a little more for themselves and their families. And the employer got more workers to work, i. e. higher productivity and saved money because he didn't pay them the "reward" he promised. This case explains how employers "save" money to the detriment of the health of workers and punish them because they are sick. And their conditions and diseases are very often caused by arduous working conditions.

SUPPLIER FOR GERMAN BRAND OLYMP

Workers producing for the German brand Olymp have a production quota which they have to meet. Fulfilling it depends from worker to worker, but most of them agree that the quota is at least 10% higher than it should be. If they don't reach the quota until the end of the week they have to finish the work on Saturday.¹⁶ According to the interviewed workers, these hours are sometimes not logged at all and sometimes are not paid properly. Workers earn just the minimum wage plus overtime, which is not paid in full. They also reported wage delays – at the time of research (end of October) they were still not paid for the month of August.

A part of the workers travel to work by car and as compensation they get a voucher for the factory's store in the amount that depends on the distance between their home and work. Paying travel costs in vouchers is problematic, because, of course, the workers cannot use it to buy fuel. Other workers travel by bus and they get an annual bus ticket. Besides that they don't get any allowances, for example subsidies, such as meal allowance, or Christmas or Easter bonus – so in the end they are left with the bare minimum.

Workers stated that it was hard to get a day off, because there was not enough workers as it was and as soon as someone was missing this would affect the whole production line. The supervisors would put pressure on the workers, even if someone was in the hospital. "On one occasion the supervisor told me – go take your child to the doctor, bring him back, but in the meantime come to work. She even called me when I was in the emergency department in hospital to come to work", said one worker.

"If you get sick, you'd better kill yourself. If you had to undergo a medical procedure or a surgery, you could hardly afford the medication and post-operative care. Colds, flu – we recover from those in the factory."



The minimum hygienic standards in the factory are not met – only a few toilets are available, not enough for a factory employing 300 workers; additionally, there is no water in the toilet, so workers have to pour water into buckets and then throw it in toilet bowl; there is no paper and soap, so they have to bring it from home. Most of the workers are women, so this is especially problematic to them when they get their menstruation. Management has a clean, separate toilet which is functioning normally. The heating system is not working properly – in some parts of the factory it is too hot, while in others there is not heating at all, like in the cafeteria which looks like a hangar with tables and chairs – "like in a kennel", as one of the workers described it. Workers reported that there was not enough air during the summer: "We'll choke up like chickens", said one of them.

Toilets which are not working, bad heating, dim lightning, this is what this factory is "equipped" with. It is also equipped with cameras, which are installed in the plant and used so that the supervisors can monitor the workers and threaten them. Workers are very aware that they're being monitored, their every action recorded, which causes them additional stress.

¹⁶ Workers said that coming to work on Saturdays presents a problem to them, because on Saturdays the schools are closed, which means that school bus doesn't operate. This in the end means that the workers have to come to work with their cars and pay travel expenses by themselves.



"Our employer can cover all of our monthly salaries with the deliveries he makes in one week. There is a lot of work, a lot of orders, but we finish them on time and still there is no money for us. We work more and they value us even less."

SUBSIDIARY OF ITALIAN BRAND BENETTON

Although the Benetton group has their Code of Conduct placed on noticeboard of the factory, which guarantees "full compliance with all applicable laws and regulations relating to International Labour Standards", the factory's management doesn't respect it in practice.

New workers in the factory are employed on temporary contracts, which are renewed every one, two or three months. This usually goes on for three years, because it is – under Croatia's Labour Act – legal to employ people on temporary contracts for three years. After three years the workers should get a permanent contract, but the employer sometimes doesn't renew their contract for a short period. This way the workers have a short break in employment and after two months¹⁷ the employer calls them back to work. Interviewed workers knew what temporary employment entails – either from their friends' experience or their personal experience. This type of work brings precariousness

and financial instability. Workers employed on short-term contracts are afraid to take sick leave and some workers reported that one woman had to hide that she was pregnant, because the company wouldn't renew her contract.

Work in factory is organized in several sections and some of them work in four shifts (6 hours/shift) to avoid legal provision for break. According to Labour Act,¹⁸ the employer is obliged to provide the workers with a 30-minute paid break if the workers work more than six hours. For workers this means no time to rest during the shift at all. Also, the shifts change every week, which is very exhausting for the workers. Average wage of interviewed workers in Benetton supplier factory is slightly above the minimum wage, they get their Christmas and annual leave bonuses, which are paid (and which they don't receive if they have more than 15 days of sick leave) and Easter bonus is paid in the form of a voucher. Travel costs are reimbursed in the form of a bus ticket or as monetary compensation for those traveling by car, but in this case it doesn't cover the whole amount.

Workers in Benetton factory are under a lot of stress. They are put under pressure if they want to take sick leave and when they finally get it,

¹⁷ Legal provision for period of time after which worker can be employed again temporarily – Labour Act, Art. 12. 93/14, 127/17, 98/19.

¹⁸ Labour Act (consolidated text), Article 44. Official Gazette no. 137/2004. – http://www.vsrh.hr/CustomPages/Static/HRV/Files/Legislation_Labour-Act.pdf

"We never saw the data on how much the brands pay for our products. The director always says that the company is not making enough money. According to him, we should work even harder, more. He tells us that we are drones, a bunch of goof-offs."

Punishing workers: forbidding entrance into the factory

At the time of our research entrance into the factory of the supplier for Hugo Boss, Escada and Windsor was forbidden to workers until 5:55 (they work from 6 o'clock). Some of workers would come to work 30-45 min earlier because they use public transportation, so they had to wait outside the factory for the gates to open. The reason for closing was the case when one coat was nowhere to be found. It got lost somewhere in the process of delivery to the buyer. Director assumed that one of workers stole it early in the morning, when few people were in the factory. She decided to punish all the workers, even though there was no evidence to back her assumption. Additionally, she forbade entrance to the cafeteria, except during the break. Because of that workers had to drink water from the toilet, which is not for drinking. If they wanted to warm themselves with a tea or coffee they had to wait for the break during which there wasn't enough time for everyone to get their drinks. Workers said that they find this prohibition humiliating.

supervisors text them and ask when are they coming back to work. Management does not tolerate even emergency absence. On one occasion a machine broke down and oil was spilled all over one of the workers, who asked the boss to go home so he could wash himself. She barely let him go, after he convinced her that oil can be dangerous if it gets to the skin.

Employer sometimes raises the salary for HRK 100-300 (EUR 14-40) and then blackmails the workers saying "We increased your salaries and this is how you repay us?" (if the workers complain about something). What they also do is that they increase the workers' salaries before the state raises the minimum wage, so it looks like the bosses care for workers. But when the official minimum wage is raised the workers are once again paid minimum wage.



GARMENT WORKSHOP

In small garment workshop workers are producing for the domestic market, sewing made-to-measure clothing and doing repairs. In total seven people are employed. Every day it takes an hour and a half one way for the interviewed worker to arrive to work. Her travel costs are paid, but not the whole amount. Very often she has to work on Saturdays, beside regular working hours during the week days. She is not paid overtime and she gets a part of her salary in cash. She works additional jobs, such as sewing and repairs for colleagues and neighbors to earn additional income. If she wants to take a day off she needs to ask for it at least a week earlier and she has to come some other day (Saturday) to compensate for taking a day off.



"There is a bell that rings when we begin work and when we take a break. We are just waiting for them to tell us that we have to report when we have our period."

"Our children are forced to buy only cheap stuff and products on sale. They are used to that."

"Technical director once said to my colleague that he would drink tap water from our toilet only if he was forced to. So that's what we are and what they think of us – we are forced to drink the water that is not actually safe for drinking, like slaves."

"We're not allowed to listen to the radio, although the atmosphere is better when the radio is on and when we can sing and work."

HEALTH&SAFETY ISSUES

The consequences long working hours and inadequate care for the workers' health and safety leave on mental and physical health of workers are problems which are common in all the factories researched. Back pain and varicose veins because of long sitting, nerve clamps, inflammation of eyes and ears, skin irritation, eye and respiratory tract irritation due to dust are only some of occupational diseases these workers suffer from. More than two thirds of workers take pills because of these problems. Furthermore, stress and poor nutrition also cause health problems. When it comes to food and nourishment, workers are forced to buy low quality food which is cheaper, without proper nutritional value. Many of the workers should have access to medical treatment of health problems related to their work, but they cannot afford them, neither financially, nor time-wise.

Inadequate work environment presents another set of problems. Factories are dirty and unhygienic, toilets are not clean, and there are no hygienic supplies. It's very stifling and hot during the summer (40-50 degrees). Lightning in the factories

"I'm not satisfied with the working conditions. We don't have windows and the factory hall doors are located 50 meters from us, so it's stifling. Everything is dusty and damp. Our toilets are squat toilets, which are also dirty."

is dim, which causes eyesight problems. Workers reported experiencing choking feeling and feeling like they are suffocating, several cases of fainting, cutting and suturing and finger contusion on machines they work on. According to workers, the reason for these cases is excessive heat and a high level of exhaustion, but the main reason is that plants are not adapted to working conditions.

STORY OF A WORKER

"We are paid very little for working on Saturdays. We get vouchers to cover our travel costs, which we cannot use because we can use them only to buy shirts which we don't wear. I travel by car, about fifteen kilometers one way. I buy gas and food myself, from my poor salary. We don't even know what Christmas and Easter bonuses are. We can't cover basic expenses with our salary, I don't know where to start. You spend half of it on transportation, personal hygiene, something to eat and that's it. I wish we didn't have to meet quotas. Because of quotas we can't raise our heads from the table and we just think whether or not we will meet the quota. Sometimes the director gets angry and hot-headed, and he says – those who didn't meet the quota cannot go home. Then some poor women stay. Workers in the company are older, we're all exhausted, and you can't treat us like we are 20-year-olds anymore. When we come back from sick leave they make us pay, they either move us to another workplace, and when we complain they tell us – what do you want, you just came back from sick leave..."

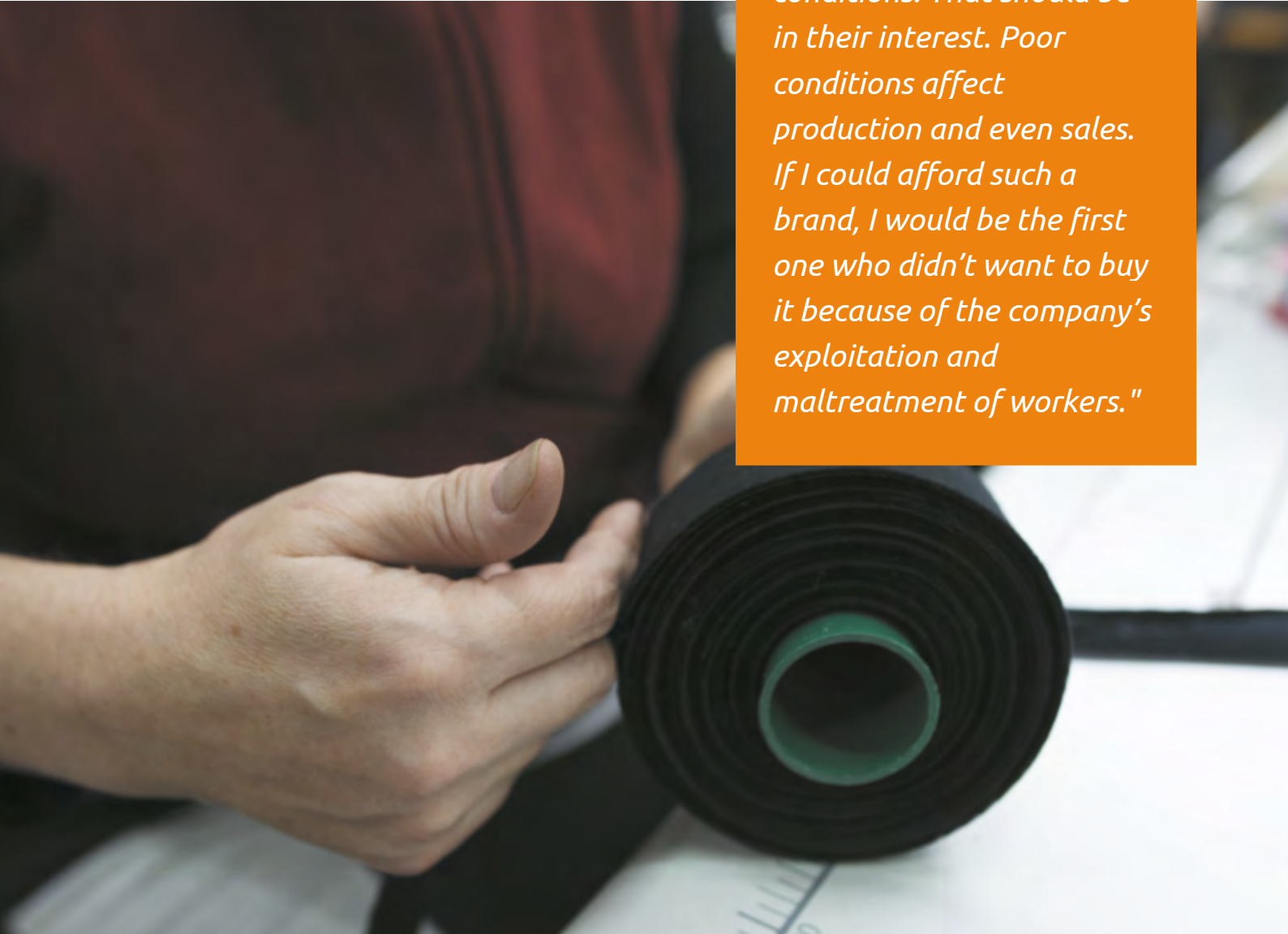
ORGANIZING IN UNIONS

Research showed that many workers don't feel that unions are organizations supposed to fight for their rights and don't think of them as organizations they should be a part of. One of the reasons they feel that way is the fact that unions did not do a lot for the workers in past (and somewhere in present) and general mistrust in these types of organizations. Out of 38 interviewed workers, 20 are unionized. Some were very mad and disappointed with the unions in their factory. Workers say that they are not helping them in their struggle. Some said that union organizations are struggling themselves, but they don't have enough power. Others were satisfied because unions negotiated the payment of overtime through lawsuits. Worker from the garment workshop said that it is hard to fight for their rights in a small collective, because everyone is thinking only of themselves.

Workers weren't well-informed about collective agreements. They either didn't know if their company was covered by a collective agreement or what rights it included. Collective agreement is not recognized as something worth fighting for.

According to the interviewed workers, main obstacles towards organizing are fear of getting fired (due to age), fear of sanctions and lack of information about their rights and rights they could obtain. Also, there is lack of confidence among workers as colleagues and a lot of divisions between them created by the employer, as well as the lack of solidarity.

As a conclusion, we can say that organizing in these factories is not banned like in some other factories or some other countries, but workers feel discouraged to improve their current position. Economic pressure keeps workers' fighting spirit low, but also some union leaders or shop-stewards can be blamed for that state of inactivity. In order to encourage workers to organize and take collective initiatives to improve their working conditions, unions should agitate more about the possibilities of organizing, but workers should also learn more about their rights. No one will give us better conditions, we have to fight for them!



"I think Benetton could improve the working conditions. That should be in their interest. Poor conditions affect production and even sales. If I could afford such a brand, I would be the first one who didn't want to buy it because of the company's exploitation and maltreatment of workers."



MARIJA'S EXPERIENCE

Marija (name is changed) has been employed as operator on machines for seven years in the weaving section. Marija monitors 17 machines six hours per day, six days per week and every week works in a different shift. Bosses consider that this is not much work and that workers are not tired after a six-hour shift, so they offend them by calling them “non-workers”. However, the workers work without a break, they have only one day per week free and there are many night shifts to which a worker constantly needs to adapt. In addition to verbal mobbing, supervisors have come up with other ways of blackmailing.

“The director would take out a camera and take pictures of the workers as they were walking by. If someone works in a fast line and she catches them walking, she uses it against them so that they can't complain that the tempo of machinery is too intense.”

Marija travels by car, 25 kilometers in one direction. The money she gets for travel expenses covers only half of the real cost of transport. Work on Sundays and night shifts are paid a little bit more than the usual hourly rate, so her salary with those extra allowances is around HRK 3,500/ EUR 471. When Marija pays monthly installment loan she is left with amount between HRK 2,500/EUR 336 and HRK 2,900/ EUR 390.

“I cover my own food expenses, sometimes I bring food from home, sometimes not, depending on finances. I cannot buy a slightly better car, so I drive an old one that gets lousy mileage. They don't pay travel expenses in full. There are three of us, me and two kids whom I should put through school. I have to do additional jobs; I clean offices, apartments, houses, summer houses, whatever I can find. During the summer I work during my annual leave, for the whole three weeks, while those of better social status are at the seaside. If I work in night shifts I need the whole following week to rest from it, because the body cannot stand the constant change in the biorhythm. The family sometimes suffers because of this.”



**Clean
Clothes
Campaign**

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PDF Country profile available at:
<https://cleanclothes.org/resources/country-profile>

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Quotes used in this document were not sourced from the individuals shown on the photographs. Moreover, these individuals are in no way affiliated with the people we interviewed as part of our research.



"They act as if we are worthless and useless, but in fact we are those who produce.

Both programmers and the director are redundant without us producing and monitoring the production process. We are the ones creating the profit."

INTENSE TEMPO OF MACHINERY

Ivana (the name was changed) has been working in a Benetton subsidiary for 15 years already. Her job is monitoring at least ten machines that knit different pieces of clothing - sleeves, collars, front, back, etc. and inspecting these pieces.

"The machine takes a minute and a half to ten minutes to knit one piece of clothing; it depends on what it is knitting. For example, I work on ten machines and one machine knits one piece in four minutes, another machine in five minutes, the third one in seven minutes. All this has to be inspected, the fiber that is left over has to be cleaned, faulty parts have to be separated... I tie the threads, thread a needle, change threads, repair them if they crack, clean machines and weigh the packages we weaved, tear the faulty pieces. It is exhausting because the machine that is the first in the line has already knitted a few pieces while I circle around the other 13 machines in the production line. The tempo of machinery is very intense.

Since 2019 we have been working in six-hour shifts. Few years ago we could program the machine so it knits certain number of pieces while we're on a break. Now we're not supposed to do that, although it is possible. That way they banned us to use our break in a cultured way. For example, if my machine knits several pieces of garment in four, five, six minutes, and I have 14 machines, imagine how much it will knit while I'm on a break. It's impossible that I finish all that work before the end of my shift. Because of that we stopped going on a break."