

Belgium

In 2014, a coalition of Belgian civil society organizations launched the “Social Protection for All” national campaign to promote the human right to social protection. The aim of the Campaign is to raise awareness on the importance of social protection worldwide and convince Belgian and European policy-makers to take action to put the right to social protection for everyone across the world into practice.

Under the auspices of the two main umbrella organizations of the Belgian North-South movement, 11.11.11 (Dutch speaking Belgium) and CNCD-11.11.11 (French and German speaking Belgium), a group of trade unions, health mutual organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) designed and implemented a campaign called “Social Protection for All”. Both umbrella organizations have a longstanding tradition of developing awareness-raising campaigns and conducting joint advocacy work targeted towards Belgian decision-makers.

The starting point for the Campaign was the unacceptable fact that 73 per cent of the world’s population does not enjoy access to comprehensive social protection.

National social protection floors (SPFs) guarantee access to essential health care and basic income security for children, persons of working age and older persons.

185 countries have adopted the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202), an approach to achieve universal social protection.

This note presents a successful country experience of building a culture of social protection.



Main lessons learned

- The collaboration and coordinated action of a coalition of civil society organizations is a powerful tool to convince people and policy-makers of the importance of adequate social protection worldwide.
- The Campaign showed that communication and awareness raising in social protection are powerful tools to realize the right to social protection.
- While older generations are aware of the importance of social protection because they have enjoyed the continuous developments achieved over the last century, often newer generations take social protection for granted and are not aware of its importance. The Campaign was an opportunity to explain to the Belgian population that everyone should be concerned about social protection policies.
- The principle of the “right to social protection” received broad support. Many people understood that social protection is a basic prerequisite for a decent life.

1. Why is the “Social Protection for All” campaign needed?

The Campaign was developed and launched based on the following two main reasons:

- Civil society organizations involved (trade unions, health mutual organizations and NGOs) found that there was very little knowledge amongst the Belgian population about the substantial lack of social protection in the world. A decision was therefore taken to conduct a large-scale awareness-raising campaign to highlight the challenges faced by people who do not enjoy adequate social protection around the world.
- In the past, Belgium has had a lead role in promoting the issue of social protection on the international agenda. Despite this track record, campaign partners are convinced that the Belgian authorities could play an even greater and stronger role in the future. With the support of the wider public on this issue, the coalition seeks to ensure that social protection is firmly anchored in Belgian foreign policy.

Moreover, in Belgium, a high-income country, the issue of social protection remains a topical theme. Social protection guarantees, as in other European countries, are under increasing pressure. The Campaign is also an ideal opportunity to explain to the Belgian population that the struggle for comprehensive social protection policies is relevant in Belgium and in many other countries, as highlighted by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

2. How does the Campaign work?

The design of the Campaign started in 2014 with a seminar to develop the key strategic lines. Key UN experts, including from ILO and the then UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food participated in the seminar. Soon after, campaign partners agreed on one vision and a joint working definition of social protection as a sound basis for the two-year Campaign, which is largely inspired by ILO standards in the field of social protection, particularly the Social Security (Minimum Standards) Convention, 1952 (No. 102), and the Social Protection Floors Recommendation, 2012 (No. 202).

The Campaign aims to:

- raise awareness amongst the general public about the importance of social protection and make them aware of the fact that billions of people in the world lack access to social protection; and

- put pressure on Belgian and European policy-makers to give social protection a central role in foreign policy.

The target groups are:

- the general public;
- Belgian and European policy-makers;
- the members and supporters of the different campaign partners; and
- children and adolescents attending primary and secondary education.



To develop the advocacy agenda and the awareness-raising materials, the partners’ coalition established two different working groups. An advocacy working group wrote a powerful dossier on social protection worldwide, calling for “solidarity-based social protection, by all, for all”. It also developed a manifesto to gather the institutional support of other Belgian civil society organizations for the Campaign. By the end of 2015, a total of 56 Belgian civil society organizations signed up to the campaign manifesto.

A campaign working group developed the materials and communication tools to make the general public aware of the importance of social protection worldwide:

- a common website containing information on the Campaign and all the materials developed;
- a documentary about social protection in Bolivia, Senegal and Belgium as well as an interactive game on developing a social protection system. [They were awarded three prizes.](#)
- photos and film documenting the contrast between those who enjoy social protection and those that are excluded in Mali;
- a video collecting testimonies from persons deprived of social protection in the Global South and experiences to facilitate and promote access to social protection;

- educational materials for primary and secondary schools: (i) campaign partners developed an education toolkit, including a board game, about social protection and lesson tips for teachers; (ii) 11.11.11 commissioned a theatre company to produce a musical on the topic of social protection, thereby bringing the subject to the children's level; (iv) CNCD-11.11.11 made an exhibition with cartoons which travelled the country. On their request, a theatre company produced a play about social protection in Belgium and internationally. It played extensively in schools, training centres and cultural centres. (v) an action day was organized in schools. The coalition called on many schools to host awareness-raising actions, thereby putting the Campaign in the spotlight. Hundreds of actions brought thousands of pupils into contact with the Campaign;
- a video clip that was broadcast on national television reaching hundreds of thousands of people; and
- a compelling movie that, through creative word play, highlighted social protection. The message was: "Solidarity and caring for one another. In society we leave no one behind, we turn our back on no one."

In the first year of the Campaign, the coalition of partners tried as much as possible to get people to express their support for social protection for all. To that end, a specific plaster was developed with the slogan "Social Protection for All", which people were invited to stick somewhere on their body before taking a selfie and uploading it on the Campaign's website.

Initially, the communication materials were used by all Campaign partners to convey the same message. In the second year, each partner had the freedom to focus on a specific topic relating to social protection. 11.11.11 has chosen to highlight health care in the South. CNCD-11.11.11 has worked on the link between free trade negotiations and social protection. The common advocacy working group remains deeply committed to embedding the principle of social protection in Belgian foreign policy.

With the support of partners in the South, the coalition launched a global call to action on social protection. To that end, they developed a visual "world map of actions" undertaken by civil society organizations around the world to promote solidarity-based social protection. It is a strong signal for politicians that people and civil

society worldwide want solidarity-based social protection for all. Every added action increases the power of the Campaign. These actions are gathered on a separate website. With operations in Belgium and throughout the world, the Campaign can convince politicians of the need for adequate social protection worldwide.



3. What are some of the impacts of the Campaign?

- In May 2016, the Belgian Federal Parliament adopted a resolution that requests the Belgian Government to give a clear and central place to social protection in Belgian international policy. As a result, the Federal Public Service on Social Security has concluded a cooperation agreement with the Belgian Development Agency to put their expertise at the disposal of third countries seeking support.
- More than 40,000 people posted a selfie to express their support for social protection for all.
- Guy Ryder, ILO Director General, expressed his support for the Campaign at the Belgian Federal Parliament in December 2015 and called upon the Belgian Government to support social protection worldwide.
- A total of 56 Belgian civil society organizations expressed their support for the Campaign by signing the manifesto.

The principle of the right to social protection received broad support. Many people understood that social protection is a basic need for a decent life.

4. What are the challenges?

The Campaign will officially finalize its activities in December 2016. Its legacy is a full package of tools and communication materials. The major challenge is the appropriation of these materials and the Campaign's message by civil society in Belgium in order to continue raising awareness and advocating for the extension of social protection.

The partners of the coalition:



REFERENCES

A collection of testimonies from the South about the consequences of not having access to social protection. Available at:

<http://socialebescherming.be/campagne/zuidverhalen.aspx> (in Dutch) and
<http://www.protectionsociale.be/-du-nord-au-sud-et-vice-versa-> (in French).

Education toolkit including a board game about social protection, lesson tips for teachers.

Available at: <http://www.11.be/kom-in-actie/op-school/secundair/item/eerste-hulp-bij-Onderwijs-koffer> (in Dutch) and <http://www.cncd.be/mallette-pedagogique-protection-sociale-pour-tous>

Multimedia project concerning social protection in the world including a film and an interactive game for the general public. Available at:

<http://www.bienvenueaprovidence.com/>

Film footage about the contrast between enjoying social protection and having none at all in Mali. Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M2IFU2QsC7s>.

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Building Social Protection Floors

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