

Introduction: Smartphones, laptops and other electronic devices have become omnipresent in our society. With an expected annual growth of 9.6 % between 2017 and 2022, Information, Communication and Technology (ICT) is one of the fastest growing industries. While everybody knows ICT brands, many people are unaware of the situation in the electronics supply chains. Lacking transparency and with huge impacts on environment and people, human rights and labour rights are breached every day.

Make ICT Fair is an EU-wide project that aims to improve the lives of workers and communities affected by the production of ICT devices such as smartphones and laptops. We target EU citizens, public procurers, development banks, decision-makers, and companies to improve their purchasing practices and to align policies.

Below, we present a few cases currently monitored by some of the members of the Make ICT Fair consortium.

LABOUR RIGHTS ISSUES IN FOXCONN FACTORY IN CZECHIA BY ELECTRONICS WATCH

In early 2016, Electronics Watch partners conducted a full compliance investigation following complaints of breaches of labour standards at a Foxconn factory in Czechia. At that time, Foxconn's most important customers were HP for desktops, servers, and data centres, and Cisco for routers, switches, and servers. Foxconn employs about 5,000 workers in Pardubice and Kutná Hora.

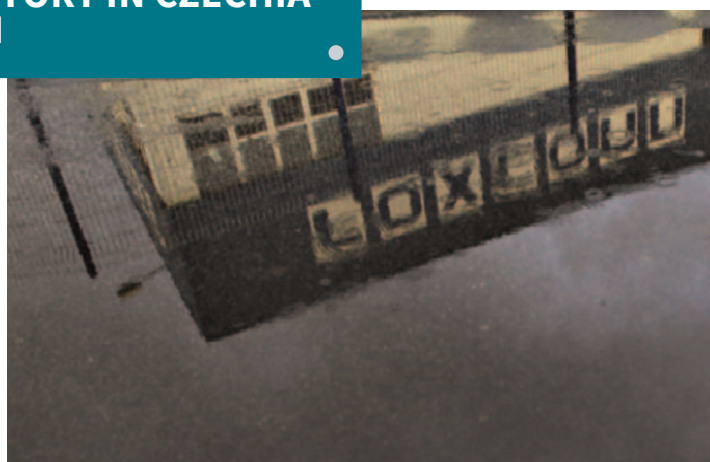


Photo: Václav Vašků

Supported by its affiliates – public buyers from all over Europe – Electronics Watch engaged with Foxconn, HP, and local workers' rights organisations to address issues of job insecurity and unpredictable work.

In early 2017, a full compliance investigation by Electronics Watch and MKC Praha found evidence of improved production planning between HP and Foxconn, which allowed workers to reduce weekend work. In addition, a minimum income guarantee for temporary indirect workers, independently of the number of hours they receive in a month, provided some security in the face of unpredictable hours. However, indirect workers still feared job loss and experienced significant layoffs during periods of low demand. They faced excessive working hours and received payslips that hid basic information about wages and deductions. These and other points were addressed through a corrective action plan. HP has played a significant role in bringing Electronics Watch together with Foxconn to discuss the steps forward.

Further reading in the Electronic Watch report on labour standards compliance at the Foxconn factory in Pardubice at electronicswatch.org/en/monitoring-reports_2542963

ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS RISKS CONNECTED TO COPPER MINING IN ZAMBIA BY SWEDWATCH



Copper is a vital metal used in ICT products and components such as circuit boards and wire. Zambia is the seventh largest producer of copper in the world. About 10,000 hectares in the Zambian Copperbelt Province, where most mines are located, are estimated to be contaminated by mineral waste, constituting an environmental risk to the surrounding areas. Water pollution linked to mining in Zambia is mainly caused by the discharge of toxic and acidic water and spills into water bodies damaging aquatic life and agricultural land.

In 2018, Swedwatch conducted research on the impact of the Konkola Copper Mines Plc operations in Chingola. Findings indicated that toxic discharge and silt has polluted waterways used by communities for drinking, bathing, washing and irrigating crops, and that farmland has been destroyed due to pollution and siltation of the nearby stream receiving wastewater from the mine. Findings suggest that the pollution of farmland has negatively impacted the health of the community, their livelihoods, and food security. Parents struggle to send children to school as income levels have decreased from loss of crop yields. Early marriages were said to have increased as parents were not able to support their daughters.

Swedwatch concludes that the mining company's operations in Chingola have seemingly caused impacts on water as a human right as stipulated by the declaration by the UN General Assembly, making the water unsafe and of an unacceptable quality. Findings highlight access to clean water as a prerequisite to the enjoyment of other human rights. Swedwatch's findings also suggest that there is a need for the ICT sector as a whole to enhance human rights due diligence efforts beyond the scope of conflict minerals and cobalt, and include copper and other high-risk materials.

Further reading in the Swedwatch report "COPPER WITH A COST. Human rights and environmental risks in the mineral supply chains of ICT: A case study from Zambia" on [swedwatch.org](https://www.swedwatch.org).

LABOUR CONDITIONS IN BOLIVIAN MINING COOPERATIVES AND ITS IMPACT ON THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE COMMUNITIES BY CATAPA

Tin, lead, and silver are especially important for small cheap compact stainless electronic devices. There are no international traceability criteria in order to know the origin of the traded metals with certainty. This allows their extraction in precarious health, safety and working conditions on the Bolivian highlands. Nowadays, there are more mining cooperatives than ever in Bolivia, engaging over 100 000 miners. CATAPA visited mining cooperatives in 2018 and 2019.

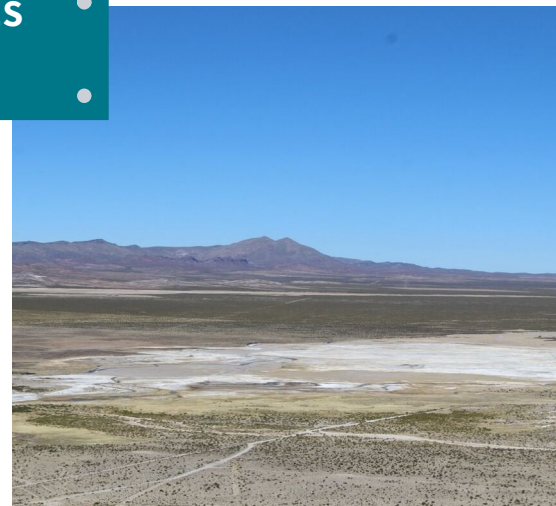


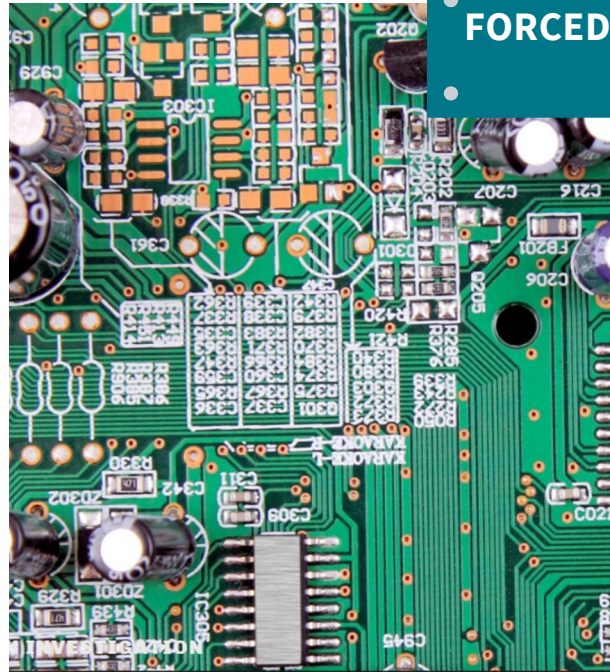
Photo: CATAPA

Mining cooperatives in Bolivia extract minerals using minimal technologies and security measures, creating a risk of accidents. Miners are associated self-employed workers, thus not receiving any salary but only being paid for the mineral they extract. The distribution of the revenue inside the cooperative is very limited. Health and safety conditions in the mine have stayed similar to those in colonial times.

Cooperative miners working in the areas of the concentration process are impacted by uncontrolled use of toxic substances such as xanthate and kerosene, which cause direct irritation of the eyes but also long-term effects. Families of miners are also affected due to the lack of hygienic precautions. Lastly, metal mining, especially when produced without any appropriate storage of the waste rock, and with the uncontrolled use of chemicals - such as xanthate - have a huge environmental impact and make agriculture in the area impossible. As a result, farmers are forced to migrate or to join the cooperative miners, spreading small cooperative exploitations over a larger territory.

Further reading on CATAPA research on Bolivia at catapa.be/en/bolivia.

Photo: Amin Kamrani



FORCED LABOUR BEHIND GERMAN, DUTCH, FRENCH AND ITALIAN ELECTRONICS BY DANWATCH

Malaysia is one of the world’s leading exporters of ICT with electronics accounting for almost 40 percent of the country’s total exports in 2018, according to the Malaysian government. Most of the internationally best-selling electronic brands are in one way or another sourcing from Malaysia.

The industry’s investments focused on the low-cost, labour-intensive manufacturing sector, creating a huge demand for cheap labour. But in the process, the country has become addicted to migrant labour.

An estimated 4-6 million migrants from Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar and Indonesia are employed in Malaysia’s manufacturing sector. A major part of them play a vital part in its electronics industry. Danwatch has interviewed Nepalese and Indonesian workers in Malaysia who said that they were prevented from quitting their jobs to return to their home countries. The migrants that Danwatch interviewed were all hired by a labour agent to work at a Malaysian factory that is part of the German Possehl Group. The Possehl factory processes products used by the major European and American chip manufacturers Infineon, ST Micro, NXP, Texas Instruments, Vishay, and Diodes Inc. These companies deliver parts of equipment to some of the best-known computer and telephone makers such as Intel, Microsoft, Sony, HP and Google.

The workers of a factory supplying Panasonic and Toshiba claim they had their passports confiscated, received violent threats, and were deceived about major parts of their wages. According to the legal and human rights organisations' field, the working conditions constitute forced labour.

Further reading on [danwatch.dk](https://danwatch.dk/en/undersogelse/how-the-global-electronics-industry-came-to-rely-on-forced-labour-and-debt-bondage/) at <https://danwatch.dk/en/undersogelse/how-the-global-electronics-industry-came-to-rely-on-forced-labour-and-debt-bondage/>

FREEDOM OF OPINION AT RISK DUE TO THE ICT DRIVEN GOLD MINING IN ARMENIA BY CEE BANKWATCH

The electronics sector consumes close to 9% of the global gold demand. The gold mining and processing technology of cyanide leaching are considered a direct threat to the local environment and communities, especially affecting land use, water, and air quality. The case of the Amulsar gold mine in Armenia, owned by the company Lydian International, gives an example of the impact on the water quality and biodiversity, but also on the right to freedom of opinion and expression.



Photo: Bankwatch

CEE Bankwatch has cooperated with Armenian civil society groups and local residents, who were complaining about the lack of participation in decision-making processes related to the permitting and construction of the mine. Communities have presented their legal arguments which, over the past three years have yet to produce any positive results. On 22nd June 2018, they initiated an ongoing blockade of the mining roads to hinder access to the mine. Lydian International ignored the calls and instead used force to break the road blockades in August 2018, intimidated people by spreading rumours, discrediting them and provoking antagonism against them, and suing the protesters and activists in court.

Lydian Armenia pressures the Armenian government to allow operations to resume. In March 2019, for example, it notified the Armenian government of an existing dispute in front of arbitration tribunals for breach of UK and Canada bilateral investment treaties (ISDS), while it continued to criticize the Armenian government's behaviour via its web page and in investors' forums.

Further reading in the CEE Bankwatch materials at bankwatch.org/search?_sf_s=Amulsar.

About Make ICT Fair

Make ICT Fair is an EU-wide project that aims to improve the lives of workers and communities affected by the production of ICT devices such as smartphones and laptops. We target EU citizens, public procurers, development banks, decision-makers, and companies to improve their purchasing practices and to align policies. The partners: CEE Bankwatch, CATAPA, Electronics Watch, ICLEI, Le Monde Diplomatique, People & Planet, SETEM Catalunya, Südwind, Swedwatch, Towards Sustainability Association, and the University of Edinburgh.



This project is organised with the financial assistance of the European Union. The contents of this publication is the sole responsibility of the authors and can under no circumstances be regarded as reflecting the position of the European Union.