

Uruguay: Building Trade Union Power

Sunday 8 July 2018, by [WACHENDORFER Achim](#), [PADRÓN Álvaro](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2017).

Abstract

Uruguayan trade unionism is currently experiencing an extraordinary situation, something like a golden era. When the political party alliance Frente Amplio (FA) [Broad Front] took office in 2005, its power resources increased significantly. The FA's electoral success was also the result of a long-term strategic relationship between the Plenario Intersindical de Trabajadores – Convención Nacional de Trabajadores (PIT-CNT) [Inter-union Workers' Plenary – National Workers' Convention] and this political force, to which the trade unions contributed their mobilising and organising capacity. But even though trade unionism has been strongly favoured during the three FA administrations, it does not depend on this alliance. In the past, unions have shown a strong commitment towards unification, high resistance capacity even in difficult times, good organisational structures and high articulating capacities with other actors, and nevertheless maintained their autonomy. It was precisely those factors and characteristics which turned the trade union movement into an indispensable »dream partner« of the FA. It is also true that the Uruguayan trade unionism has been able to develop within a rather exceptional context in Latin America, since it is grounded on the traditions of a welfare state sustained by a major framework of democratic institutions. This means that trade unionism has, with the exception of the authoritarian and dictatorial periods, always been regarded as a legitimate actor in the country's institutional framework.

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