



ETUC

NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION

N°4
January 2006



Dear readers,

The year 2006 has got off to a reasonably good start.

The European economy is finally showing signs of a general recovery: the fall in unemployment in Germany is evidence of this. But these signs still remain fragile. Under the positive influence of the agreement on the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013 in December, the engine of European integration is starting up again. It is in this context that Austria has started its six months' Presidency of the European Union. Presenting the Presidency's work programme, Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel announced its intention of providing a 'vitamin boost for Europe'. The issues that the Presidency intends to push forward – notably the directives on services and the management of working time – are of crucial importance for Europe's workers. The European Trade Union Confederation confirms its active participation in these debates.

We are convinced that Europe needs genuine **services for citizens**. That is why we will all be joining forces to demonstrate in Strasbourg on 14 February to call for some major changes to the draft services directive proposed by the Commission.

This period has likewise been characterised by the revival of the European Social Dialogue, a key element in our model for society. The recent agreement on the work programme for the Social Dialogue for 2006-2008 is a strong signal from the social partners vis-à-vis their commitment to the process of European integration. The ETUC will do its utmost to ensure that these commitments are followed up by some concrete actions.

John Monks
General Secretary

To keep you more regularly up to date with the issues of the day, our newsletter will be published monthly as from January 2006.

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EU news

Rejection of the directive on the liberalisation of port services – 18/01/2006

The European Parliament has rejected the directive on the liberalisation of port services with 532 votes for, 120 votes against and 25 abstentions. In the view of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the result of this vote is a clear signal to European leaders that they have to take into account citizens' concerns regarding their working conditions.

[ETUC press release](#)[European Transport Workers' Federation press release](#)[European Parliament press release](#)

Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers: Europe needs flexicurity and not deregulation – 20/01/2006

The Austrian Presidency of the European Union held an [informal meeting](#) of the employment and social affairs ministers in Villach on 19-20 January to address the subjects of [flexicurity](#) and the social dimension of the revised [Lisbon Strategy](#). Before the official opening of the work, a delegation from the European trade union movement participated in the meeting with the other social partners and the representatives of the Presidency. John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), said: *'The Lisbon Strategy will never work if policy-makers decide that economic policy should take precedence over social policy. At the moment, there is a widely held, almost theological belief in too many Member States, and in parts of the Commission too, that any regulation will kill off growth and competitiveness and harm employment. That has clearly not been the case in some outstanding European success story countries such as Denmark, Finland, Sweden and Austria. They have promoted 'flexicurity', a concept the ETUC supports. This promotes good standards which help growth and change. That is the method for Europe to advance afresh.'*

[ETUC press release](#)[Presidency press release](#)

Brief notes on the January European Parliament plenary session – 20/01/2006

By 541 votes to 56, the European Parliament (EP) rejected EU leaders' proposals for the 2007-2013 Financial Perspectives. As a result, the European Parliament opened negotiations with the Council in order to find an agreement on the future long-term financial framework. On 1 February the European Commission was due to present a new budgetary proposal to the Council and to the European Parliament.

During the first plenary of 2006, Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) also adopted the [« Duff-Voggenhuber »](#) report calling for a new Constitution to be agreed by 2009. Most MEPs insisted that the constitutional process must continue because the majority of European citizens have already approved the text.

[Results of the votes at January plenary session](#)

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Lisbon process: ETUC demands an end to excessive competition – 25/01/2006

Following the relaunch of the Lisbon process, [the European Commission evaluated](#) the National Reform Programmes submitted by Member States in the second half of 2005. Based on reactions from affiliated trade unions, the European Trade Union Confederation has made its own preliminary assessment. According to ETUC analysis, the National Reform Plans show some major weaknesses:

- Superficial consultation with trade unions;
- Watering down of the previous employment strategy. Precise targets on active but positive labour market policies are generally not taken up;
- There is a tendency to focus on even more labour market flexibility without paying much attention to the security of the workforce;
- Neglect of the social dimension. Only a few National Reform Programmes identify social cohesion objectives as a key concern;
- Macro-economic policies ignore the need to 'dynamise' the economy by stimulating a robust recovery;
- Targets for more innovation, research and development are well-intentioned, but it remains unclear how they will be financed.

These weaknesses have to do with the fact that the Commission sees its role as limited to encouraging ever more intense competitive pressures without providing Europe with a framework that prevents "cut-throat" competition. The ETUC regrets that the original European idea of cooperation between Member States is being replaced by competition in all sorts of areas (social dumping, tax dumping, competitive wage moderation, competitive flexibility).

For the Lisbon process to work, and to address the all too widespread feeling amongst workers that Europe has become a threat to their living standards and working conditions, the Commission needs to show leadership by devising European policies that put workers' rights, social policy and Social Europe centre stage. In the coming weeks, the ETUC will make further proposals on this.

[ETUC press release](#)[European commission press release](#)

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ETUC news

Evaluation of the UK Presidency – 09/01/2006

Drawing on the [trade union memorandum presented on 28 June last](#) to United Kingdom Prime Minister Tony Blair, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) regrets the rather negative outcome of the six-month Presidency that is just ending. The European trade unionists argue that the sole priority of the UK Presidency has been to reinforce European competitiveness at any price, to the detriment of social rights. The UK Presidency is not the only one to blame for this, but it does bear a major responsibility for this crisis. The ETUC welcomes the fact that the European Council on 15-16 December secured an agreement on the financial perspectives 2007-2013, sending out a strong signal for the development of the construction of Europe. Likewise, the European trade union movement applauded the Informal European Council at Hampton Court and the Tripartite Social Summit at Lancaster House. However, it is now time for these initiatives to be given the proper follow-up.

[Evaluation of the UK Presidency](#)

Meeting between the ETUC and the Austrian Presidency – 11/01/2006

John Monks and a delegation of ETUC trade unionists met the Austrian Presidency of the EU in Vienna. The trade unionists presented Austrian Chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel with the trade unions' key demands for the coming six months of Austria's EU Presidency. *'The European approach must be the promotion of a social market economy where economic and social progress go hand in hand,'* said John Monks. The ETUC is calling on the Presidency to give new backing to the Lisbon Strategy goals, through investment in economic growth, innovation, research and development, lifelong learning and the creation of better jobs. It welcomes the Presidency's pledge to revive debate over the EU Constitutional Treaty and the future of Europe. The ETUC likewise emphasises the need to secure a balanced agreement on the draft Services Directive, which, as John Monks puts it, as things stand, *'far from developing the single market, has increased the risk of protectionism by making citizens fearful that foreign companies might arrive to take up work, while ignoring the protection of the environment, of labour and of consumers, as well as other standards.'* The trade union delegation pressed upon the Austrian Presidency some other key demands for the creation of a genuinely Social Europe, including:



Source: OGB

- a change in economic policy to promote growth, through a European Initiative for Recovery;
- urgent agreement on a budget for 2007-2013, to support stronger EU cohesion;
- an end to the opt-out in the revised Working Time Directive;
- ambitious action to implement the European Youth Pact.

[ETUC press release](#)[Speech by John Monks](#)[Speech by Cándido Méndez](#)[Trade Union Memorandum to the Austrian Presidency](#)[Presidency press release](#)

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European social dialogue: agreement on work programme 2006-2008 – 25/01/2006

On 25 January, the negotiation teams of [ETUC](#), [UNICE/UEAPME](#) and [CEEP](#) agreed on a proposal for a work programme for the European social dialogue 2006-2008. This text will now be sent to each organisation's decision-making body for final adoption before the [Tripartite Social Summit on 23 March 2006](#). The aim of this second EU social dialogue work programme 2006-2008 is to contribute to and promote growth, jobs and modernisation of the EU social model. The proposal for an autonomous work programme 2006-2008 builds on the achievements of the [first EU social dialogue multi-annual work programme](#), for the period 2003-2005.

The European Social Partners believe that their new work programme should focus on Europe's major economic and social challenges, in order to ensure that the social dialogue at European level deals with the main concerns of Europe's workers and employers. They will use a variety of tools to implement it.



[Joint press release of ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP](#)

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EU Agenda

January – February 2006

12-14/01/2006	Justice and Internal affairs Council (Vienna)	Council agenda
16-19/01/2006	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session agenda
19-21/01/2006	Informal Employment and Social affairs Council (Villach)	Council agenda
24/01/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
29/01/2006	Informal Trade Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
30-31/01/2006	General affairs and External relations Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
1-2/02/2006	'Mini-plenary' session at European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary session agenda
13-16/02/2006	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session agenda
14/02/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
15/02/2006	EU-Russia Summit (Vienna)	Summit agenda
20-21/02/2006	Justice and Internal affairs Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
21/02/2006	EU-China Summit (Vienna)	Summit agenda
23/02/2006	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
27-28/02/2006	General affairs and External relations Council (Brussels)	Council agenda

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ETUC Agenda

January – February 2006

	31/01/2006	Press conference on the 'Laval (Vaxholm)' case (Brussels)	
	2-3/02/2006	Trade union press meeting (Brussels)	
	08/02/2006	Extraordinary meeting of the "Employees" Group of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
	09/02/2006	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
	09/02/2006	Press conference on the Services Directive (Brussels)	
	14/02/2006	Services Directive Demonstration (Strasbourg)	Demonstration programme
	14/02/2006	Press conference linked to the demonstration (Strasbourg)	
	14-15/02/2006	European Economic and Social Committee Plenary Session (Brussels)	

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Dossier

The ETUC explores the resources needed to strengthen trade union membership

Throughout 2006, the newsletter of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) will be putting together a file on union membership (characteristics, recruitment, best practice). This will link in to the ETUC action plan on organisation and recruitment ahead of the next congress in Seville in 2007. Reinforcing union membership is one of the European trade union movement's priorities. The 2005 ETUC summer school reached a wide consensus on this subject: the ETUC needs to act as a platform and a motor for strengthening the unions' identity and influence. Rates of union membership are falling. The sociological profile of union members has specific characteristics (e.g. few young people or migrants), but this profile is being transformed (more women and retired people). So it is in the interest of the European trade union movement to examine these particular features as well as the changes taking place. Unions face a series of challenges: finding ways of countering the fall in membership, recruiting in sectors outside those that traditionally account for the bulk of union members (the public sector), and adapting to new, atypical forms of employment. In short, they need to revamp trade union organisation. At stake is the survival of the trade union movement and the social dialogue, because the drop in numbers of members always goes hand in hand with a fall in material and financial resources, and consequently a loss of influence at the political level. Moreover, there are signs of the emergence of new forms of collective solidarity. Yet the unions have a greater 'raison d'être' than ever before in an economic context characterised by increasingly precarious conditions. This is where they need to demonstrate they are effective. Various statistical studies show that the rate of trade union membership in the European Union has declined noticeably over recent years, falling from 32.5% in 1995 to 26.5% by 2001. The current level is one of the lowest in Europe's history.

Rate of trade union membership in the Member States of the European Union

	1980 (%)	1990 (%)	1995 (%)	2002 (%)
Sweden	78.2	80.0	83.1	78.0
Denmark	78.6	75.3	77.0	73.8*
Finland	69.4	72.2	78.0	71.2
Cyprus				70.0
Malta		54.4	56.0	62.8
Belgium	53.4	53.9	55.7	55.8*
Slovenia				41.0
Ireland	57.4	51.0	47.1	35.9
Austria	58.4	46.9	40.7	35.4
Slovakia		78.7	57.3	35.4
Italy	54.5	38.8	38.1	34.0
Luxembourg		44.8	38.7	33.5*
United Kingdom	55.1	39.3	34.1	30.4
Latvia				20.0
Greece		32.4	29.6	26.7*
Czech Republic		78.7	46.3	25.1
Portugal		31.7	25.4	
Germany	34.9	31.2	29.2	23.2
Netherlands	34.8	25.5	25.7	22.1
Hungary			63.4	19.9
Estonia		90.6	31.6	16.6*
Lithuania				16.0
Spain	8.3	14.7	16.3	
Poland			32.9	14.7*
France	17.1	10.1	9.8	9.7*

Source: J. Waddington, [La syndicalisation en Europe](#), ETUI-REHS, July 2005

(Notes: Data marked * relate to 2001; blanks indicate an absence of reliable data)

However, the situation is not the same everywhere: certain countries have seen a positive trend in their rates of trade union membership. These include the Scandinavian countries, where three quarters of workers are members of a trade union. On the other hand, in the majority of the new Member States, the rate of trade union membership is no higher than 20%. The disparity between the countries with the highest and the lowest rates of union membership stood at 68% in 2002.

The reasons for these variations in levels of union membership are manifold, and relate to socio-economic history and the organisation of industrial relations in the individual countries. Broadly speaking, all the European trade union organisations are affected by some transverse phenomena which shed doubt on the 'classic' motivations driving people to join a trade union. The introduction of ever more flexible working relations has changed the relationship of solidarity between people working in the same productive unit. If we factor in to this trend the rapid development of subcontracting arrangements, outsourcing, and above all the internationalisation of the productive systems, we are forced to recognise the far-reaching alteration of the working world that has occurred over recent years. Likewise, according to some surveys, workers prefer to talk direct with their employers if there is a problem, rather than going via their union representatives. In the face of these changes, which are affecting the whole of Europe, the trade union movement needs to adapt, to react and to find fresh ways of acting and recruitment that will take into account the growing diversity among workers and workplaces.

Union membership has thus become one of the major priorities of every trade union organisation in Europe. Some, in fact, have already tackled the problem by launching some innovative activities. Even if the ETUC does not recruit members directly, its position within Europe may serve as an appropriate central focus for the pooling of best practice among national trade union organisations.

Economic relations between Member States are increasingly important, leading trade unionists to have more contacts with each other. This makes it essential for trade unions to have up-to-date information about the activities that others are carrying out. That is why we are asking you to send us details of any good practices you have initiated which have delivered convincing results.

Throughout this process, we shall be drawing together all examples of good practice within member organisations. In particular, we shall be concentrating on recruitment strategies aimed at young people, people in precarious jobs, and migrants.

We shall also be devoting a special section to this subject on our website. This will include the project on 'Union membership for young people' that is currently underway.

Please send your contributions or suggestions to: dmelli@etuc.org.

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Communications



Press conference on the 'Laval (Vaxholm)' case – 31/01/2006

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Swedish trade union confederation (LO) organized a joint press conference on the Laval case attended by 25 journalists. John Monks, the ETUC General Secretary and Erland Olauson, Vice-President of LO Sweden, expressed their strong opposition to any form of discrimination between workers in the labour market in Europe. The ETUC supports the LO Sweden and the Swedish Building Worker's Union (SBWU) in its fight to uphold and respect agreed pay rates and conditions in their own country.

[ETUC press release](#)[The 'Laval' case](#)

Publications – recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [«Creating an innovative Europe»](#) Report (20/01);
- [Annual Progress Report on the Lisbon Strategy](#) (25/01)
- [Communication on Western Balkans](#) (27/01);

The European Commission plans to issue these publications in February 2006:

- Annual evaluation of the stability and convergence programmes (01/02);
- Negotiating document on the inter-institutional Agreement on the Financial Perspectives (01/02);
- First report on the current state of play of transitional arrangements on the free movement of labour from new Member States (08/02)

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Route of the Euro-demo 'Services for the people' on 14/02/2006

PARCOURS DE LA MANIFESTATION ROUTE OF THE DEMONSTRATION

11H45 - 12H45 : RDV des leaders syndicaux avec la Presse – Hôtel Holiday In (Place de Bordeaux)

Départ : Place du Faubourg de Pierre

12H00 : Rassemblement et composition du cortège

13H00 : Départ du cortège

Arrivée : Podium (Boulevard de Dresde)

14H15 : Animation musicale

14H45 : Discours des leaders syndicaux

15H00 : Animation musicale

15H30 : Fin de la manifestation

11:45-12:45 : Union leaders to meet the Press – Holiday Inn Hotel (Place de Bordeaux)

Departure: Place du Faubourg de Pierre

12:00 : Meeting point for the line-up of the procession

13:00 : Departure of the procession

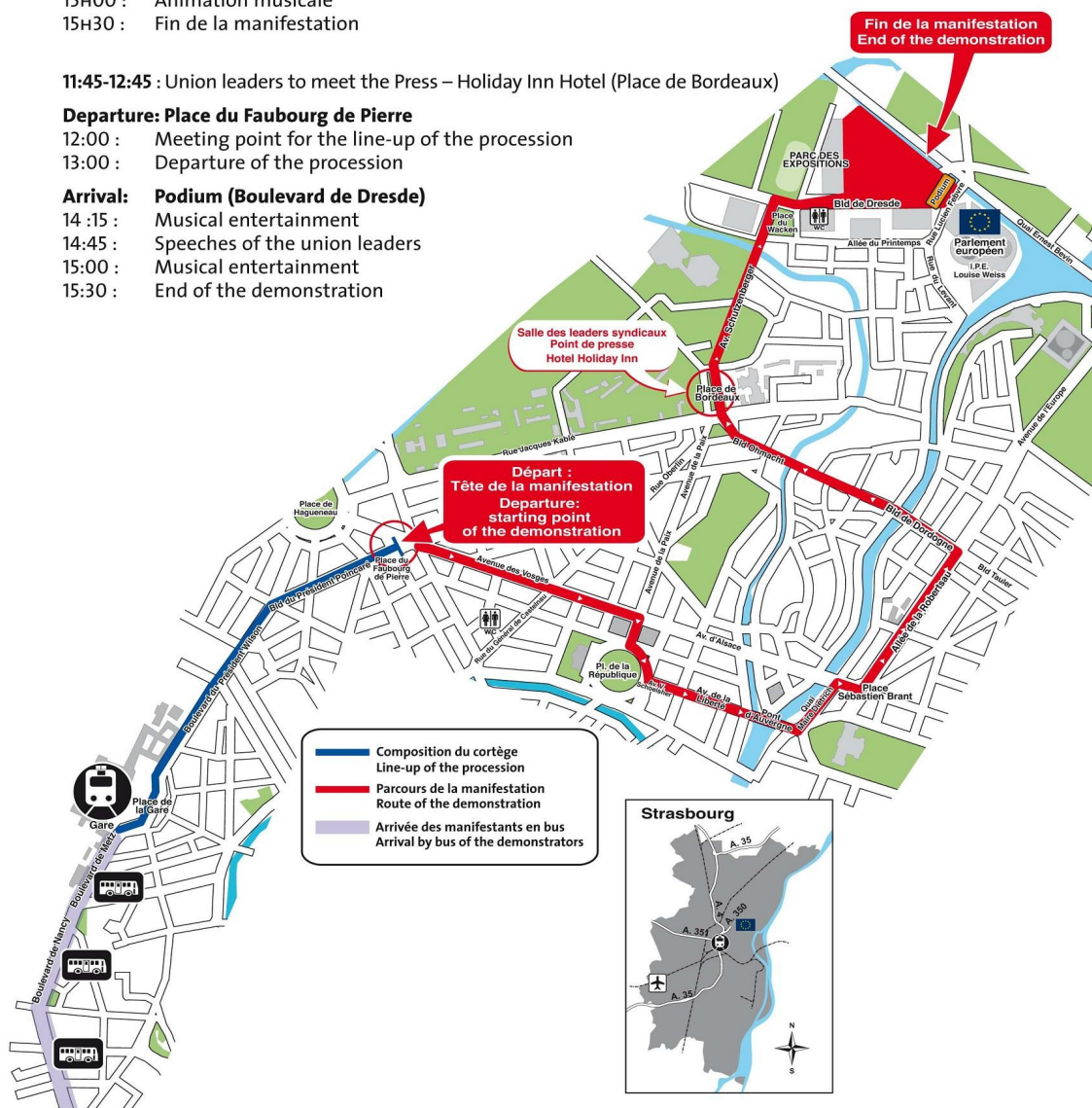
Arrival: Podium (Boulevard de Dresde)

14 :15 : Musical entertainment

14:45 : Speeches of the union leaders

15:00 : Musical entertainment

15:30 : End of the demonstration



[Leaflet setting out Euro-demo demands](#)



[Further reading on the ETUC mobilisation](#)

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STRASBOURG - 14 | 02 | 2006

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people*

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14/02/06

13:00



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