



# ETUC NEWSLETTER

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION  
CONFEDERATION

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Dear Readers,

The key political and social issues on the European scene are entering into a sensitive and important phase.

The Council's recent political agreement on the Services Directive represents a step forward on that question. Apparently, the agreement respects the guidelines of Parliament's vote and of the Commission's amended proposal. We welcome this outcome, but still have certain concerns, in particular on the social dimension of the directive.

The text will be presented to the European Parliament and put to the vote at second reading. We are counting on Parliament to conduct a serious analysis of the Council's agreement and to make any adjustments that may be needed.

The upcoming Employment Council on 2 June will also have to address a subject crucial to the European trade union movement: the Working Time Directive. Time and again, we have pressed for better working conditions for European citizens and for upward harmonisation of achievements in the social sphere.

The ETUC is very concerned about the way this issue is evolving. We urge the European institutions to see to it that the revision of this directive is compatible with the European Treaties, the Charter of Fundamental Rights and the case law of the European Court of Justice.

These matters will be reviewed at our next Executive Committee meeting on 6-7 June. We plan to make sure these issues evolve in the direction of a more social Europe that can earn the support of European workers.

John Monks  
General Secretary

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## EU News

### 10th anniversary of the revised Social Charter - 04/05/2006

The [Council of Europe](#) (COE) celebrated the **10th anniversary of the opening for signature and ratification of the European Revised Social Charter (RSC)**, on 3 May 1996.

**The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)**, which has been actively involved in both the drafting and the supervisory mechanisms of the RSC, **associated itself fully with the well justified congratulations expressed on that occasion**.

Many successes have been achieved so far.

Yet **the ETUC is convinced that in order to give the RSC the bright future it deserves** - as a cornerstone and core instrument for the protection of fundamental social rights throughout Europe - **the following actions, amongst others, are crucial**:

- **All the 46 member states of the Council of Europe should ratify the RSC** as well as the related Protocol of Collective Complaints;
- **The COE should strive to make the RSC even more effective** by guaranteeing the necessary **political support** and **budgetary resources** to all its supervisory bodies;
- All actors involved in the application and implementation of the RSC should undertake all appropriate initiatives **to increase awareness**, knowledge and use of the RSC amongst legislative, administrative and judicial bodies, as well as the general public.

On the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the RSC, **the ETUC also reiterates its longstanding demand that the EU should, as soon as possible, adhere to the European Convention of Human Rights**, to which the RSC is an indispensable complement.



[ETUC press release](#)

[Council of Europe website on European Revised Social Charter](#)

### ETUC fears interest rate hikes are preventing the euro area recovery - 08/05/2006

The European Commission published its **Spring Economic Forecasts for 2006-2007** on 8 May.

**The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) regretted that growth is not moving into higher gear in 2007**. According to an [ETUC report](#), instead of accelerating above 2-2.5% in order to eliminate spare capacity built up during a lengthy period of stagnation - the **best-case scenario limits growth in 2007 to around 2%**.

The ETUC report blames this on misguided **monetary and fiscal policies**.

If the euro area wants to move into a cycle of high investments and high growth, **then a moratorium on further interest-rate hikes needs to be introduced**.

Says John Monks, ETUC General Secretary: "The long run starts now, and it should start with full recovery from slump. The European Central Bank (ECB) and finance ministers should be working to strengthen growth further in 2007 instead of removing aggregate demand stimulus."



[ETUC press release](#)

[Commission press release](#)

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## **Education Council: European social partners work together on lifelong learning in Europe – 19/05/2006**

On the eve of the EU Education Council on 19 May, the [European Trade Union Confederation](#) (ETUC) and the social partners on the employers' side, the [Union of the Industrial Federations of the EEC countries](#) (UNICE), the [European Association of Craft Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises](#) (UEAPME) and the [European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest](#) (CEEP), met the **troika of Education Ministers and the European Education Commissioner**. They presented their evaluation report of four years' joint work to promote **the lifelong development of competences and qualifications in Europe**. The European social partners will build on this activity in their **Work Programme 2006-2008**. The **framework of actions on lifelong learning**, the **three annual progress reports** and the **evaluation report** are available on the European social partners' [websites](#).

[ETUC – UNICE/UEAPME – CEEP joint press release](#)[The framework of actions on lifelong learning](#)

## **EU action to put decent work on international agenda is urgently needed – 24/05/2006**

The European Commission issued a [Communication on 'decent work'](#) putting workers' rights and basic employment standards on the European and international political agendas. **The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), Solidar and the Global Progressive Forum welcomed this overdue initiative**, calling on EU and international decision-makers to take firm action to deliver decent work for all.

[ICFTU – WCL – ETUC – Solidar – Global Progressive Forum joint press release](#)[Commission press release](#)

## **Services Directive: the ETUC welcomes the Council agreement – 29/05/2006**

**Ministers responsible for the internal market** came to a **political agreement on the opening of the services**.

**The ETUC welcomes this political agreement**. However, **certain details remain to be clarified** concerning the social dimension of the directive.

**The ETUC is calling on the Parliament to carry out a serious evaluation of the Council agreement** and to demand corrections if need be, with a **view to obtaining the wide support of European citizens and workers** at the second reading.

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

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## ETUC News

### **ETUC Steering Committee – 04/05/2006**

The ETUC Steering Committee **met on 4 May** in Brussels. Members discussed, among other things, the **role of the future Pan-European Regional Council** (PERC) in contributing to the creation of a single worldwide trade union organisation. They also considered the problem of **human trafficking in the context of the forthcoming football World Cup** in Germany. The ETUC secretariat reported to Steering Committee members on developments in the negotiations on **violence at work** within the European social dialogue.

### **ETUC welcomes social partner agreement curbing precarious work in Spain - 09-05-2006**

After 14 months of negotiations, **Spanish trade unions, employer organisations and government signed an agreement** tackling the widespread abuse of fixed-term work contracts.

**Improving workforce security by fighting excessive flexibility makes good social and economic sense.**

Says ETUC General Secretary John Monks: "Europe must be open to change. However, shifting the full burden of adjustment onto workers is not the solution. To reach higher productivity and more innovation, Europe needs a secure workforce."

**The ETUC believes policy-makers throughout Europe should draw the lesson that policy measures to fight excessive flexibility in the labour market and working contracts are necessary and urgent.**

It also invites the European Commission to examine what can be done on this issue at European level.

[ETUC press release](#)[Comisiones Obreras \(CC.OO\) web site](#)[Union General de Trabajadores \(UGT\) web site](#)

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## EU Agenda

### May - June 2006

03/05/2006	EU – USA Troika	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
05/05/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
11-13/05/2006	4 <sup>th</sup> Eu – Latin American – Caribbean Summit (Vienne)	<a href="#">Summit Agenda</a>
15-16/05/2006	General Affairs and External Relations (with Defense Ministers) Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
15-18/05/2006	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	<a href="#">Plenary session Agenda</a>
17-18/05/2006	Plenary session at European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
18-19/05/2006	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
19-21/05/2006	Informal Meeting of Environment Ministers (Eisenstadt / Rust , Austria)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
25/05/2006	EU – Russia Summit	<a href="#">Summit Agenda</a>
29-30/05/2006	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
31/05/2006	'Mini-plenary' session at European Parliament (Brussels)	<a href="#">Plenary session Agenda</a>
01-02/06/2006	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
01-02/06/2006	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
07/06/2006	ECOFIN Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
08-09/06/2006	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
12-13/06/2006	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
12-15/06/2006	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	<a href="#">Plenary session Agenda</a>
15-16/06/2006	European Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">European Council Agenda</a>
26-27/06/2006	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
26-27/06/2006	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
29/06/2006	Competitiveness Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>

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## ETUC Agenda

### May - June 2006

- 04/05/2006 ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)
- 17/05/2006 Employees Group Meeting at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)
- 19-21/05/2006 OPZZ Congress (Warsawa, Poland) [Congress programme](#)
- 22-26/05/2006 DGB Congress (Berlin, Germany) [Congress programme](#)
- 05-07/06/2006 SAK Congress (Helsinki, Finland) [Congress programme](#)
- 06/06/2006 ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)
- 06-07/06/2006 ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)
- 07/06/2006 ETUC Press conference (Brussels) [Press conference programme](#)
- 09-10/06/2006 FGTB Congress (Brussels)
- 12-16/06/2006 CFDT Congress (Grenoble, France)
- 21/06/2006 Employees Group extraordinary Meeting at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)
- 25-28/06/2006 UIL Congress
- 30/06-01/07/2006 ETUC Summer School (Stockholm, Sweden)

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## Communications

### Publications- recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [Commission to adopt preliminary draft budget for 2007](#) (03/05);
- [Enlargement, Two Years After - An Economic Success](#) (03/05);
- [Spring Economic Forecast](#) (08/05);
- [Communication on the Future of Europe](#) (10/05);
- [Monitoring Reports on Bulgaria's and Romania's preparations for EU accession](#) (16/05);
- [Promoting decent work in the world](#) (24/05);

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

- A new programme for innovation and competitiveness (01/06);
- 4th Progress Report on economic and social cohesion (07/06)

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## Dossier

### Trade union recruitment in Sweden

After our review of the good practices of the British Trade Union Confederation (TUC), we shall now head to northern Europe, to **Sweden**, to be more exact.

**Sweden is the country with the highest rate of trade union membership in the European Union (78% in 2002).** The reason for this high rate, so often compared to those of other countries ([see Newsletter No 4 – January 2006](#)), is the close involvement of Swedish unions in the management of unemployment benefit (**so-called "Ghent system<sup>1</sup>"**).

What is more, **trade union membership in Sweden is based on socio-economic criteria** related to the different occupational sectors, unlike trade union confederations based on political or religious leanings.

In Sweden, **blue-collar workers** are affiliated to the Swedish Trade Union Confederation **LO** ([Landsorganisationen i Sverige](#)), **white-collar workers** to the Swedish Confederation for Professional Employees **TCO** ([Tjänstemännen Centralorganisation](#)) and **professionals with a university degree** to the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations **SACO** ([Sveriges Akademikers Centralorganisation](#)).

This breakdown enabled the Swedish trade union movement to become established in the 1920s in both private industry and the public sector. **It also helped promote very high trade union density, for both white-collar and blue-collar workers, in the public and private sectors alike.**

**Even in a system of this type, however, trade union recruitment is still a considerable challenge.** From the end of the 1980s, the percentage of workers choosing to obtain unemployment benefit without belonging to a union rose appreciably. In 2005, one worker out of seven affiliated to an unemployment benefit fund (managed by a trade union) was not a union member.

**In 1993, membership started to decline, falling from 85% to 78% in 2002.** This trend is particularly borne out **among young people**.

**Swedish trade unions have reacted**, setting up **specific programmes** in particular to recruit young people, but also to reassert unions' influence at the workplace.

### Specific plans for young people

As part of a joint co-operation project, **the Swedish trade union federations belonging to TCO**, representing employees (**HTF**), civil servants (**ST**) and local government officials (**SKTF**), set up a structure called **TRIA** to step up their presence among students. Six union officials work full-time in this structure.

The **aim** of the project is not only to enrol **26,000 students by 2007, but also to ensure that half of these students remain members of one of the three federations affiliated to TCO once they join the workforce.** With that aim in mind, each federation taking part in the project makes available a second official whose job is to work exclusively on problems related to the transition of young graduates to working life.

TRIA's slogan is "**Get ready for working life.**"

TRIA organises a wide range of activities and offers a number of services to its members.

These are locally-based activities, such as the organisation of seminars on subjects related to social issues and on union membership in Sweden and at international level. The activities also allow **contacts with young workers**. A telephone help desk, **TRIA-Direkt**, has also been set up: students can use it to ask questions about working life, social standards and so on, and have an answer within 24 hours. The service is available Monday to Friday from 8:00 to 20:00.

<sup>1</sup>The Ghent system takes its name from the creation in 1900, by the Town Council of Ghent (Belgium), of an unemployment benefit fund managed by the trade unions. The Ghent system is found in Denmark, Sweden, Finland and Belgium.

**A lot of attention is also given to communication:** TRIA's founders have given new vitality to the image of trade unions among young people by launching, among other initiatives, a website – [www.tria.se](http://www.tria.se) – designed specially to appeal to a young public.

**The TRIA project was kicked off in 2005 and will be operational until 2007.** A year on from its launch, the first assessments are positive: the number of students affiliated to the three organisations has risen from 15,500 to 18,000.

**Focusing attention on young people is also the key element of the recruitment strategy of the trade union confederation LO. Relations with schools are given particular attention.**

In 2005, LO launched a **multiannual project for visiting all Swedish secondary schools by the end of 2008. The idea is to inform future workers on their rights and on trade union activities.** Each LO member organisation makes a skeleton staff available at the school and manages its own activities.

This approach gives the unions more visibility and gives young people training in unionism.

With the same objective in mind, **LO makes staff available and organises contacts with young people during their experiences with seasonal work**, in particular during school holiday periods. **The purpose is to inform young people about their rights as workers** and to demonstrate LO's commitment to defending workers' rights directly at the workplace. A telephone help-line and an information desk have also been put in place: in 2005, more than 6,000 young people called the help-line, while the information desk received more than 3,000 e-mails.

**The Confederation of Professional Associations, SACO, is also very active in recruiting new members, especially in universities.** Each trade union organisation sends members to universities to **meet students**.

They organise conferences and briefings to help students put together a curriculum vitae or to prepare interviews.

This activity is developed both by union members active in recruitment (an average of three to four people for an organisation of 50,000 members) and by student members hired on a part-time basis. **These activities had a positive impact in 2005: the number of student members rose by 4.4%, almost three times the rate of recruitment of new members among workers (1.5%).**

## **Revitalizing membership at local level**

The union presence at the workplace is also very important in the recruitment and organisation strategies used by Swedish trade unions.

**The Swedish employees' union SIF**, a member of TCO, **is very active in revitalizing trade union delegates.** The "local trade union power" project, run from April 2003 to October 2005 by SIF, proved to be a **positive experience**.

The aim was not simply to enhance the union's presence at the workplace by increasing its membership, but **also to provide better training for trade union delegates**, to **strengthen their commitment** and to improve relations with employers. 31 union activists worked full-time on the project, which was implemented **across Sweden**.

**The results surpassed initial projections.**

**There were more than 4,800 direct visits to workplaces, well above the 3,600 initially planned. Training courses for trade union delegates were also developed. More than 7,800 members were involved in the actions carried out as part of the project and some 1,500 new forms of trade union representations were established, almost doubling the initial goal of around 800.**

Concerning the revitalization of membership, **LO conducted a number of training activities for young union members.**

Every year, **four different trade union training courses are organised** for workers under age 30 belonging to LO's different member federations, especially in the building, forestry, metal and food industries. **The courses are sometimes the young people's first contact with unions.**

Organised and coordinated by LO members, the courses also give the young trainees a better idea of the work being carried out by members from other sectors and reinforces their commitment. **Each year, more than 2,000 workers take part in the training sessions.**

## **Focusing on new sectors of production**

Over the past decade, **the new information technologies (IT) have developed in leaps and bounds in the Swedish economy.**

The number of workers in this sector, which is increasingly crucial to the national economy, has risen appreciably.

In this context, **the Swedish employees' union (SIF) has set up a project to consolidate its presence in the IT sector.** With this project, SIF aims to **become the reference trade union** for all workers in the new information technologies sector.

The project runs from 2000 to 2008 and involves the recruitment of 14 full-time employees **working as part of a network.** The project coordination centre is located in Stockholm and has a staff of four. The other 10 staff members are based in different areas of Sweden as a means of ensuring better cooperation with the regions.

Priorities and goals are revised yearly.

The goal of the project is not only to recruit new members, but also to boost the union's visibility and influence. New "clubs" are also being organised and former members are being reactivated.

**The evaluation of the project's first five years of operation is encouraging: SIF membership has increased by 50,000.**

## **Food for thought**

Even in a context of exceptionally high trade union membership, Swedish unions are putting a lot of effort into recruiting new members.

Underpinning the success of trade union recruitment and organisation activities in Sweden are investment in human resources, training, and innovation in the services offered by unions.

The recruitment actions of the Swedish confederations are essentially based on signing up young people. The presence of unions in schools and universities is the lynchpin of the "youth" recruitment strategies of Swedish trade unions.

Thanks to this presence, unions are able to zero in on the concerns of future workers. Young people are also gaining insight into the key role trade unions play in society and the importance of the trade union commitment.

Focusing attention on young people is a vital element of the drive by the Swedish trade union movement to grow stronger while ensuring its renewal.

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