



ETUC NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers,

The political programme for the autumn is a busy one. Several proposals of direct concern to European workers are due to reach a decisive phase of their passage into EU law. The Services Directive and the REACH system for the regulation of chemicals should be adopted at second reading in the European Parliament before the end of the year. At the same time, an important debate on the issue of services of general interest is taking place.

In this context, the ETUC has drawn up a proposal for a framework directive on services of general interest, which make an essential contribution to economic and social cohesion in Europe and represent one of the vital pillars of our social model.

We are urging the European Commission and the Council to contribute to this debate, and also to take the initiative in pushing forward other important issues for European workers – in particular the revision of the Working Time Directive and the future of the Constitutional Treaty.

We also welcome the Commission's decision to give the green light to Bulgaria and Romania's accession to the EU in January 2007, although these countries still have some progress to make in a number of areas.

John Monks
General Secretary

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EU News

10 years of the Trade Union Asia-Europe Summit – 07-08/09/2006

On the eve of the **sixth meeting of the political leaders of Asia and Europe (ASEM)**, trade union organisations from those regions held a [Trade Union Summit](#) in Helsinki, to evaluate **the first 10 years of ASEM cooperation**.

In the ETUC's view, ASEM has not responded to the main concerns of European and Asian citizens. By focusing above all on trade and financial matters, **ASEM has been unable to deliver on promises concerning social coherence, decent work or respect for human rights**.

Although unions welcomed the recent opening of ASEM to civil society contributions, they remain critical of the top-down approach that has denied them the consultative status granted, for example, to the Asia Europe Business Forum.

According to John Monks: *"to make a difference for people in the countries concerned, it is the ASEM structure itself that needs to be modified. We need a dialogue mechanism to deal with the social consequences of globalisation that fully integrates trade unions."*

[ETUC press release](#)[ASEM Summit Presidency web site](#)[Commission press release](#)

Social partners meet José Manuel Barroso – 07/09/2006

ETUC General Secretary John Monks and Deputy General Secretary Maria Helena André, together with representatives from the [Union of the Industrial Federations of the EEC Countries](#) (UNICE) [met](#) with José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission in early September. The focus of discussion was the revised Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment.

European Social Partners address Informal ECOFIN Council – 08-09/09/2006

At the invitation of the Finnish EU Presidency, **John Monks took part for the first time in the informal meeting of EU finance ministers (ECOFIN) in Finland**. The economic and financial aspects of the energy and finance markets and globalisation were the main topics of debate.

[John Monks speech at informal ECOFIN](#)[Council press release](#)

Accession of Bulgaria and Romania: an important step for Europe, but improvements are still needed – 26/09/2006

On 26 September the **European Commission** published its [monitoring report](#), **giving the go-ahead for Bulgaria and Romania to join the EU from 1 January 2007. The ETUC welcomes this decision**, but draws attention to areas where **further progress is still needed**, particularly in relation to social dialogue, social policy and employment issues. More also needs to be done to protect and integrate minorities, particularly the Roma population. The ETUC will continue to support its affiliates in both countries in pursuing these objectives. The European trade union movement calls on national and European authorities also to take action on these issues.

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

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● **ETUC demands greater clarity for services of general interest and proposes a framework directive – 28/09/2006**

On 27 September, [the European Parliament voted by a large majority in favour of a call for greater legal clarity for services of general \(economic\) interest - SG\(E\)Is.](#)

In the ETUC's view, services of general interest represent one of the main pillars of the European social model and must **be safeguarded and developed**

To this end, the **ETUC Steering Committee** has proposed **a framework directive on services of general economic interest.**

Despite the Commission's failure thus far to draft such a directive, **the ETUC has decided to kick-start the debate by proposing key elements to be included.** In the view of the European trade union movement, services of general economic interest need to be based on **general principles** such as **equal access, high-quality service, fair prices, universality, high-quality work and jobs, and security.**

[ETUC press release](#)[Draft of the Framework Directive proposed by the ETUC](#)

● **ETUC condemns World Bank for attacking workers' rights in Europe – 28/09/2006**

At a meeting at the headquarters of the employers' organisation UNICE, **the World Bank presented its study 'Doing business'**, on regulations that are supposedly hindering business activity.

This publication targets, in particular, **workers' rights** that constitute a key ingredient of the European social dimension.

Countries that require advance notice for dismissal, establish a working week of less than 66 hours or set minimum wages above a certain very low level are considered investment-unfriendly, according to the World Bank's logic.

The ETUC rejects such a simplistic approach.

[ETUC press release](#)[International Confederation of Free Trade Unions \(ICFTU\) press release](#)[World Bank publication 'Doing business'](#)

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ETUC News

● European Mobility Week 2006: workers must be involved – 15/09/2006

For the third year running, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is a partner in [European Mobility Week](#), organised by the European Commission.

For John Monks, ETUC General Secretary, "it makes real sense to involve European unions because workers are exposed on a daily basis to the consequences of poor transport management. Improving day-to-day mobility means developing modes of transport that provide a real alternative to the car by adopting ambitious policies for investment in public transport as well as infrastructure for cyclists and pedestrians."

Workers can take very specific action by calling on companies to draw up mobility plans and by negotiating collective agreements with employers that include a section on mobility. "Innovative agreements on telework, the geographical mobility of workers and the reimbursement of public transport tickets are being signed across Europe and need to be developed further," declared John Monks.

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

● REACH must give workers better health protection! - 19/06/2006

The ETUC and the [European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety \(ETUI-REHS\)](#) organised a conference on how REACH ties in with European health and safety at work legislation.

About 160 representatives from European institutions, NGOs, industry and trade unions attended the event. With the draft regulation approaching its second reading, the European trade union movement reminded the European Parliament and Council that REACH must deliver real synergies with existing Community laws designed to protect workers, in particular those exposed to chemicals.



The ETUC has consistently backed the Parliament's view on the role of the substitution principle in REACH. "Authorisation for a substance of very high concern must always be refused where a safer alternative is available," argued John Monks, ETUC General Secretary, in his closing speech.

[ETUC Press release](#)[ETUC web site section dedicated to REACH](#)[REACH Procedure tracking](#)

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ETUC welcomes the EU Presidency Statement on the suppression of demonstrations in Zimbabwe – 25/09/2006

The ETUC **very much welcomes the EU's firm reaction** to the attacks on trade unionists who took part in **demonstrations in Zimbabwe on 13 September**.

On Friday (22 September) [the Finnish Presidency issued a statement on behalf of the EU](#) expressing deep concern about the situation in the country, and calling on the Zimbabwean government to halt the violence and intimidation against its citizens.

Earlier that day, **ETUC representatives met with the EU to draw attention to these abuses of human rights** and fundamental freedoms. The ETUC [supported trade unionists](#) around the world who took part in a day of protest action.

More worker participation in Europe thanks to Allianz SE – 25/09/2006

On 20 September, an **agreement on worker participation was concluded with the new European (SE) company Allianz**. For the first time ever, a large company - employing some **160,000 workers** in virtually all EU Member States - expressly subscribed to a system of European management comprising significant, mandatory worker participation. Thanks to this agreement **workers will have equal representation on the supervisory board of the SE**, as well as **a strong SE works council**. The agreement also contains a social and political preamble.

 **SEEurope** * * * * * [Read More](#)

[ETUC press release](#)

[ETUI-REHS web site on European Companies](#)

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EU Agenda

September - October 2006

01-02/09/2006	Informal Foreign Affairs Ministers meeting (Lappeenranta)	Meeting Agenda
04-07/09/2006	Plenary session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session Agenda
08-09/09/2006	Informal ECOFIN Meeting (Helsinki)	Meeting Agenda
09/09/2006	EU-China Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
09/09/2006	EU-Republic of Korea Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
10-11/09/2006	Asia-Europe Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
13-14/09/2006	Plenary session at European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
14-15/09/2006	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
20-22/09/2006	Informal Justice and Home Affairs Ministers Meeting (Tampere)	Meeting Agenda
21-22/09/2006	Informal Competitiveness Ministers Meeting (Rhodes, Greece)	Meeting Agenda
25/09/2006	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
25-28/09/2006	Plenary session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session Agenda
05-06/10/2006	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
09/10/2006	Eurogroup Meeting (Luxembourg)	Meeting Agenda
10/10/2006	ECOFIN Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
11-12/10/2006	'Mini-plenary' session at European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary session Agenda
12/10/2006	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
13/10/2006	EU-India Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
16-17/10/2006	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
20/10/2006	Informal meeting of Heads of State or Government (Lahti)	Meeting Agenda
20/10/2006	Informal tripartite Social Summit (Lahti)	Meeting Agenda
23/10/2006	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
23-26/10/2006	Plenary session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	

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ETUC Agenda

September – October 2006

●	11-14/09/2006	TUC Congress (Brighton, United Kingdom)	Congress programme
●	20/09/2006	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
●	28-30/09/2006	NSZZ Solidarnosc Congress (Szczecin, Poland)	Congress programme
●	10-11/10/2006	YS Congress (Oslo, Norvège)	Congress programme
●	18/10/2006	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
●	18-19/10/2006	ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)	
●	19-21/10/2006	CSC Congress	Congress programme

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Communications



Launch of the Commission's website for '2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All'

On the eve of '2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All', the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities has launched a new Internet portal where users will find an updated list of events at European level.

More information: empl-year2007@ec.europa.eu .



['2007 – European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' website](#)



Publications- recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [Economic interim forecasts](#) (06/09) ;
- Communication: [Efficiency and equity in European education and training systems](#) (08/09);
- Communication: [Putting knowledge into practice: A broad-based innovation strategy for the EU](#) (13/09);
- [Monitoring report on the state of preparedness for EU membership of Bulgaria and Romania](#) (26/09).

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

- Communication: *Long-term sustainability of public finances in the EU* (04/10);
- Communication: *Making demographic change an opportunity for Europe* (04/10);
- Green Paper on Labour Law (18/10)

Editorial team

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Dossier

Cross-border trade union cooperation between Austria and Hungary: a look at the Burgerland – Western Hungary ITUC

Foreword

Trade union cooperation at local and regional level is one of the **key elements in European trade unionism**. It contributes to the construction of social Europe.

The creation of the [Interregional Trade Union Councils \(ITUCs\)](#), which bring together the trade union organisations from the affiliated national confederations in the cross-border regions, has allowed the trade union organisations to hold regular meetings at local level and to pool their strengths and skills **in order to confront common challenges**.

So far, [there are 41 ITUCs](#), ranging from the far north of Sweden to the south of Spain, from Ireland in the west to Hungary in the east. [The European Trade Union Confederation \(ETUC\) coordinates their activities in collaboration with the national federations](#).

For our monthly newsletter, we have decided to develop a regular feature looking at examples of good practice in this area. We are starting with the example of the **Burgerland – Western Hungary ITUC**.



Source: http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/CSI-Ft_A3_2005-2.pdf

Historical background

The first contacts between the Austrian and Hungarian trade unions go back to the 1970s. Before the collapse of the Soviet bloc, these meetings reflected the differences between the political and economic regimes in the two countries, and the shared activities were confined strictly to protocol and ceremonial matters.

When **Hungary underwent its political transition**, the **Austrian and Hungarian trade unions decided to forge closer cooperation ties**, in order to resolve the daily problems facing workers.

In 1999, the [Federation of Austrian Trade Unions \(ÖGB\)](#) and the [National Confederation of Hungarian Trade Unions \(MSZOSZ\)](#) put their partnership on an institutional footing at cross-border and local level, establishing the [**Interregional Trade Union Council \(ITUC\) Burgerland – Western Hungary**](#).

This **cooperation quickly spread to include the other five Hungarian trade union confederations**, the [Confederation of Autonomous Trade Unions \(ASZSZ\)](#), the [Democratic League of Independent Trade Unions \(LIGA\)](#), the [National Federation of Works Councils \(MOSZ\)](#), the [Forum for Trade Union Co-operation \(SZEFF\)](#) and the [Confederation of Professional Trade Unions \(ÉSZT\)](#).

Trade union cooperation and legal assistance

In the **Burgerland** region, where Austria borders Hungary, **with an active population of some 90,000 workers, over 10% of workers are of Hungarian origin**.

They tend to work primarily in the **restaurant, catering, transport** and **farming** sectors, with most Hungarian workers not living in the region but commuting in every day from their home country.

The **major problem they face is one of ignorance** - caused primarily by language problems - **of the rights to which they are entitled as workers in Austria**, which often leads to unequal treatment compared to their Austrian counterparts with regard to wages and working conditions.

To **counter these abuses**, the **Burgerland – Western Hungary** ITUC, co-financed by the seven member unions and by community funding, provides many services to Hungarian workers.

Legal assistance is one of the services most requested by migrant workers.



It is provided daily in their mother tongue in every district of Burgerland. Since March 2004, over 7500 Hungarian workers have contacted this service to ask for information on social and labour rights, taxation, the administrative formalities to be completed and the operation of the social protection system in Austria.

The local political authorities have also publicised **this cooperation** between the Hungarian and Austrian trade unions in the legal field.

A **blacklist of employers reported for failing to comply with labour law and trade union rights** vis-à-vis migrant workers **has been drawn up jointly with the local administrations**, in order to prevent such employers from obtaining other work permits for foreign nationals. Some employers have also been prosecuted.

Following on from the success of these initiatives, the representatives of the Hungarian trade union confederations have set up **two supplementary legal information offices in Gyor and Szombathely**, the home areas of most of the migrant workers.

In 2003, a legal assistance agreement was signed by the seven ITUC member organisations: on the basis of this agreement, all migrant workers in Austria registered with the six Hungarian trade union confederations **can enjoy the same support and services provided to their Austrian counterparts who are registered with the ÖGB**.

Information sessions

A **regular cycle of information sessions** has been launched for certain categories of workers, in particular in the transport and farming sectors.

In 2006, the ITUC ran **two major inter-branch information sessions regarding the taxation system and family allowances** in Austria, **with each meeting attracting over 400 workers**.

A session dedicated to workers in the farming sector proved a similar success, with over 160 people attending.

The trade unionists in the ITUC organise regular **information days at border posts** in the morning and the evening in order to reach as many Hungarian commuters as possible: trade union representatives hand out up-to-date leaflets and are permanently available for questions.



Publication of leaflets represents a very important activity in terms of cross-border trade union cooperation. A **leaflet running to some 80 pages**, detailing all the information on the labour market and the social protection system in Austria, **has become an essential tool for Hungarian border-dwellers**. A **bilingual dictionary on the 'worlds' of work**, together with a **bilingual guide to the carriage of dangerous materials** and collective

agreements in the restaurant and farming sectors have also been produced. A [bilingual Internet site](#) carries up-to-date information on the activities of the ITUC and the new legal provisions in force.

Workers build social Europe

Based on the active commitment of the Hungarian and Austrian trade unionists, the Burgerland – Western Hungary ITUC is an impressive example of a cross-border partnership.

It does not confine itself solely to providing legal assistance to workers or giving them up-to-date information, it also helps to overcome mistrust of 'foreigners' and helps to build cross-border solidarity between workers.

On the strength of the success of the Burgerland – Western Hungary ITUC, **the Hungarian trade unions have decided to set up, on 11 October, a new Interregional Trade Union Council with the Slovenian and Croat trade union organisations.**

The creation of such a structure will strengthen European trade unionism and transform the sharing of a border into an opportunity for mutual growth and an important way of helping to construct a Europe which is both more integrated and more social.

Useful links:

- Section of the ETUC Internet site devoted to ITUCs: <http://www.etuc.org/r/28>;
- Internet Site of the Burgerland – Western Hungary ITUC: www.igr.at;

For further information:

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