



ETUC NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers,

The European trade union agenda has been particularly full during October.

We took part in the informal Tripartite Social Summit organised by the Finnish EU Presidency. The main debate focused on flexicurity. In the context of this Summit, we reaffirmed that we are in favour of flexicurity on the condition that it benefits workers as much as employers. The ETUC is obviously open to discussion on flexicurity, but it wants to see a balanced approach to the subject. Above all, we are concerned that flexibility should not damage security. The objective is to prevent any move towards more precarious employment.

Discussions in the European Parliament (EP) around the second reading of the Services Directive and the REACH regulations are entering a crucial phase. Regarding the Services Directive, the recent vote in the EP's Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) did not respect the spirit of the vote on first reading. The amendments that were designed to exclude labour law and social services more clearly from the field of application of this directive were rejected. We hope that on these questions, European decision-makers will find a solution acceptable to the interests of workers and Social Europe. On the REACH regulations, we have welcomed the vote in the EP Environment Committee on the substitution principle. We are keeping watch to ensure that this principle is maintained in the plenary vote.

In addition, the ETUC is launching a campaign on services of general interest through a petition. This petition will not be a success without your support and commitment. We are counting on you!

Social dialogue has also taken an important step this month. The European social partners presented the results of the implementation of the European Agreement on telework. This report demonstrates that the European social dialogue has been a source for developing innovative social dialogue practices across Europe.

In the coming month we will be focusing our attention on another crucial issue: the Working Time Directive.

John Monks
General Secretary

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EU News

● **ETUC warns the ECB not to mistake wages for an upward risk to price stability - 05/10/2006**

The European Central Bank (ECB) has again raised interest rates.

The ECB fears second-round effects arising from higher than expected wage increases, and **is therefore removing support from the recovery**. The **ETUC has published a study on euro area wage formation showing these fears to be totally unfounded**. The ETUC believes that a rapid rise in interest rates coupled with slower than expected wage increases could threaten continued growth.

[ETUC press release](#)[ETUC study](#)[ECB press release](#)

● **The EU should refocus its trade strategy in line with Europe's social and development objectives - 05/10/2006**

The European Commission has adopted a [Communication on a new trade strategy for the European Union](#). While reaffirming its support for multilateral negotiations, **this gives priority to concluding bilateral agreements**, which give growing power to the strongest parties.

The ETUC is very concerned about this approach and believes that the EU is in danger of missing a historic opportunity to create the basis for a new approach to trade policy. **In the view of the ETUC, the EU needs active policies to promote employment in Europe**, in line with the political objectives of the EU, including **respect for the Charter of Fundamental Rights, the promotion of decent work, the development of a positive environmental policy**, pursuing improvements to public health at international level, and the emergence of new development initiatives.

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

● **REACH: ETUC calls on the Council to follow Parliament on the substitution principle - 10/10/2006**

Extremely dangerous chemicals must be replaced when a safer alternative is available. The European Parliament's Environment Committee confirmed this **general rule** in a vote on the future European chemicals legislation.

The ETUC welcomes this vote because the rule is wholly in line with European Carcinogens Directive 2004/37/EC, **which requires employers to replace these dangerous substances where a safer alternative is available**.

The ETUC calls on the Council to go along with the Environment Committee's line on these principles when it negotiates with Parliament on second reading.

[ETUC press release](#)[REACH procedure tracking](#)

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● European Commission's Green Paper on labour law is long overdue! - 12/10/2006

The ETUC has written to European Commission President José Manuel Barroso demanding that **he should resist pressure from the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) further to delay publication of the long-awaited Green Paper on labour law.**

It is now six years since the European social partners were first consulted on the need to review systems of labour law to make sure that they are relevant to a modern organisation of work. **Yet the Commission still fails to publish the Green Paper, despite announcing it several times.**

For the ETUC, **fair and decent working standards across the EU are crucial to proper management of an emerging single European labour market.** The growth of subcontracting and outsourcing, the movement of capital and relocation of production facilities, are combining to spread insecurity not only among atypical workers but also permanent employees. **The ETUC deplores attempts by UNICE to block publication of the Green Paper, and urges the Commission not to yield to this pressure.**

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[ETUC press release](#)

● Informal tripartite social summit: flexicurity has to benefit everyone, says the ETUC - 20/10/2006

A **trade union delegation** led by the ETUC took part in the **informal tripartite social summit in Lahti (Finland).**



Source: Council

Flexicurity was the main theme of the meeting. The ETUC called on European decision-makers to adopt a **balanced approach to flexicurity, which would benefit all.**

*"We are in favour of flexicurity, on the condition that it creates a **win-win situation for workers as well as for companies** - in other words a flexicurity that lays emphasis on the **quality of employment and industrial relations**. The European Union needs a flexicurity that develops potential for workers and for jobs. This presupposes policies to **promote lifelong learning, and active policies on employment, social protection and support for workers during all forms of transition**,"* declared John Monks.

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[ETUC press release](#)

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[Tripartite social summit photogallery](#)

● ETUC calls on EU to agree binding targets for a 75% cut in greenhouse gases by 2050 - 23/10/2006

Adopting a resolution on climate change, **the Executive Committee of the ETUC called for the Kyoto Protocol to be strengthened from 2012**, and for the opening of a European tripartite social dialogue on climate change. The ETUC calls on the European Commission and the Member States to agree binding targets for **the reduction of emissions in the EU, of around 25% by 2020 and 75% by 2050, compared with 1990 levels**, without waiting for the outcome of international negotiations on the follow-up to Kyoto. Moreover, **the ETUC demands new information and consultation rights on environmental issues for workers' representatives in companies.**

 [Read More](#)

[Resolution « Tackling climate change: A social priority - Avenues for action »](#)

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Services Directive: the ETUC regrets the European Parliament IMCO vote - 24/10/2006

The ETUC is critical of the majority vote in the Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee (IMCO) of the European Parliament, on the proposed Services Directive, which accepted the position of the Council of Ministers. As a result, IMCO has not fully respected the agreement made in the European Parliament at the first reading. The European People's Party (EPP) and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) members rejected, among others, amendments for clearer exclusion of labour law and social services, and clearer respect for fundamental rights.

The European Trade Union Movement is asking the European Parliament, the Council and the Commission to find a way to improve the Directive in respect of these issues of major importance for trade unions.

[ETUC press release](#)[Services Directive procedure tracking](#)

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ETUC News

Implementation of the European telework agreement: presentation of the results - 11/10/2006

The [European Trade Union Confederation \(ETUC\)](#) and the other social partners – [the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe \(UNICE\)](#), 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 \(CEEP\)](#) – presented their **report on the implementation of the European framework agreement on telework in the presence of EU Employment Commissioner Špidla**.

Signed in July 2002, **the framework agreement on telework is the first ever implemented by the social partners themselves in their respective countries**. It sets out to define general principles for **the operation of telework in enterprises**, to meet the needs of both workers and employers. **The report analyses the initiatives used to implement the European agreement**. It illustrates the commitment of the social partners at European, national, sectoral and company levels to back up agreements reached in the European social dialogue. It also shows that the EU social dialogue offers scope for the development of innovative social dialogue practices across Europe.

[ETUC press release](#)[Report on the Implementation of the European framework agreement on telework](#)

ETUC Executive Committee - 18-19/10/2006

The ETUC Executive Committee met in Brussels and debated a number of topics of importance for Social Europe.

In reaffirming its support for the European Constitution, the ETUC Executive Committee opposed attempts to remove the **Charter of Fundamental Rights** and called for the **reinforcement of social values and principles, social and employment objectives and the recognition of the role of the social partners**.

The protection of Services of General Interest was also on the agenda. **The Executive Committee decided to support the launch of a campaign** on this issue, including a Europe-wide **petition aimed at safeguarding vital public services**.

Two resolutions about the **European Certification Framework** and tackling **climate change** were approved. The Executive also adopted a **position on the status of the European Private Company**.

[ETUC press release about the Constitutional Treaty](#)

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EU Agenda

October - November 2006

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)	
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)	Plenary session Agenda
06/11/2006	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
07/11/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
07/11/2006	Extraordinary Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
13-14/11/2006	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
13-16/11/2006	Plenary session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
13-14/11/2006	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
21/11/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
23/11/2006	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
24/11/2006	UE-Russia Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
27/11/2006	UE-Canada Summit (Helsinki)	Summit Agenda
27/11/2006	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
28/11/2006	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
30/11-01/12/2006	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda

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ETUC Agenda

October - November 2006

● 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 (Ostende)	Congress programme
● 01-03/11/2006	Founding Congress of the new International Trade Union Confederation (Vienna, Austria)	
● 08/11/2006	ETUC seminar on « Contribution of the trade union organisations to improving workers' mobility » (Brussels)	Seminar programme
● 09-11/11/2006	SGB/USS Congress (Bern, Switzerland)	Congress programme
● 09-11/11/2006	ETUC - FNPR (Federation of Independent Trade Unions of Russia) Trade Union Forum and Baltic Sea Trade Union Network High level Meeting (Helsinki, Finland)	Forum programme
● 15-16/11/2006	FTF Congress (Copenhagen, Denmark)	Congress programme
● 16/11/2006	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	

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Communications



Publications- recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [Global Europe: Competing in the World](#) (04/10);
- [The impact of ageing on public expenditure](#) (12/10);
- Communication « [The demographic future of Europe – from challenge to opportunity](#) » (12/10);
- Communication « [Action Plan for Energy Efficiency: Realising the Potential](#) » (19/10);
- Communication « [EU – China: Closer partners, growing responsibilities](#) » (24/10).

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

- Autumn's Economic Forecast (06/11);
- First findings of the Fourth European Working Conditions Survey (06/11);
- Regular report « Enlargement - the state of play and the way forward » (08/11);
- Financial services White paper (08/11).



Publications- recent documents of the [Trade Union Institute for Research \(ETUI-REHS\)](#)

The following documents are now available:

- [Women in trade unions](#) (16/10);
- [Euro area economic trends 2006 and 2007](#) (24/10).

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Interview

Interview with Maria Helena André, Deputy General Secretary of the ETUC

Elected as Deputy General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) at the Congress in Prague in May 2003, Maria Helena André is responsible, among other areas, for European social dialogue.



1) The recent Tripartite Social Summit focused on flexicurity. It was the first time the European social partners and decision-makers have debated the issue at the highest level. What is the ETUC's position?

Maria Helena André (MHA): At the informal Tripartite Social Summit in Lahti we reaffirmed our commitment to the current debate on flexicurity, on the condition that this initiative generates improvements that benefit workers as much as employers.

If flexicurity becomes synonymous with deteriorating working conditions, we will be against it. Flexibility, in itself, does not create jobs. All it does is spread insecurity and precarious work. We must be aware of that!

We are in favour of a balanced approach that defines flexicurity in a broader, more comprehensive way. In our view, it is impossible to talk about flexicurity without relating it to policies for lifelong learning, to active employment measures and support for workers during periods of change, and to strong social protection systems, like those in operation in certain Scandinavian countries.

At the same time, we are convinced that this approach to flexicurity demands the involvement of strong trade unions that can act collectively to defend and promote workers' interests. We will never accept flexibility that erodes security.

While adhering to these conditions, the European trade union movement remains very open to dialogue with the European institutions and the other social partners on this issue. We cannot miss this opportunity for dialogue on a topic that is so important to European workers.

2) The recent European Commission Communication on demographic change predicts a catastrophic situation for public finances by 2050 if the Member States do not implement structural reforms to deal with the ageing population. In order to "transform this challenge into an opportunity", the Commission proposes, among other things, "the promotion of demographic renewal, more jobs and longer working lives, higher productivity, integrating immigrants and sustainable public finances". Do you endorse the Commission's fears and predictions? What do you think of its plans for tackling the situation?

MHA: We are very well aware that our society is in the process of undergoing demographic changes.

These changes present us with new challenges and new problems, but the Commission's figures must be viewed with caution. We must not forget that these projections are only indicative. Furthermore they cover a 50-year period!

The Commission makes predictions and, like all predictions, they can change as a result of external factors. Today we must not plan, on the basis of this scenario, solutions that tie us down for the next 50 years. We agree that it is necessary to try to anticipate problems, but we must also avoid locking ourselves into a process that penalises people who are in the labour market today.

With this in view, we believe that in order to respond positively to these challenges, Europe

must find an integrated approach within the framework of a strategy that anticipates the phenomenon, and that must involve a range of actors and tools.

We find that the debate focuses too much on the question of 'viability' of public finances and pensions. The idea underlying this attitude is that social expenditure is a 'burden' for future generations. We do not share this opinion. In our view, social spending must be seen as a productive investment.

Furthermore, it is important to recognise that many reforms to pension systems have already been carried out or are underway in Member States. We cannot accept the lowering of the level of pensions, which unfortunately is happening in a number of European countries. Extending the legal retirement age is not the solution to the problem.

It is only by means of negotiations between the social partners that we will be able to bring about conditions that enable older workers to stay voluntarily in the labour market.

We must be mindful of the quality of life of older people, while at the same time defending an intergenerational approach that also allows younger people to enter the labour market, to move out of insecure work, and to make progress in their careers. This intergenerational approach to demographic change is clearly linked to the current debate on flexicurity. One cannot expect young people to have children when they are not offered secure conditions for their professional development, and a degree of stability within the labour market.

Concerning the demographic challenges, our approach combines different dimensions. We believe it is important to prioritise lifelong learning, improving the quality of work, the negotiation of adaptable working conditions, preventing workers becoming unemployed, and opportunities for people to take new directions in the second phases of their careers within the framework of social protection systems that are more tailored to their needs and less aimed at penalising individuals.

3) On 11 October, the social partners published their report on the implementation of the European telework agreement. This is the first of the new generation of agreements concluded in the context of the European social dialogue and put into practice at national level by the social partners themselves, rather than by means of a European directive. How do you evaluate its implementation?

MHA: The aim of our report was to present the results of the implementation of this agreement, because it is too early to know the full impact. The report we published with the employers simply analyses the way in which the social partners have used the agreement. I would say that in general our evaluation is rather positive, in contrast to some European sectors that doubted the European social partners' ability to put autonomous agreements into practice. We note that a multitude of different practices and instruments have been used at national level. Some agreements have been concluded through collective bargaining, and others implemented through legislation, especially in the new Member States where social dialogue structures are at an early stage of development. In some other countries, the accord has been implemented through guidelines and codes of good practice.

All this demonstrates the diversity of the national industrial relations systems – a diversity that must be respected, as long as it is possible to evaluate results in terms of better living and working conditions for employees, as well as opportunities for companies to become more productive and more competitive.

I think also that the added value of this agreement consists in the opportunity to make advance provision for a form of working that was not very common at the time (2002), but is now growing, especially in the services sector. Indeed, in some countries such as the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, 8% of the active population is on teleworking contracts.

Telework can play an important part in reconciling professional and private life, allowing workers to organise their working hours better and helping to reduce wasted time and the negative impact on the environment of daily travel from home to the workplace. At the same time, this report demonstrates that the European social dialogue represents an

important source for the development of innovative social dialogue practices in the Member States.

4) The European social dialogue Work Programme for 2006-2008 foresees the conclusion of an agreement on harassment and violence in the workplace. What are the main issues at stake in this accord, and how are the negotiations going?

MHA: The negotiations, which started last February, are still underway. We hope to finish by the end of the year, so they will last a bit longer than the nine months allowed for in the beginning. This is due to the complexity of the issue of harassment and violence and its numerous aspects.

The very fact that we decided to take up this matter is very important, given the growing number of cases of harassment and violence arising from the worsening of working conditions and the workplace environment.

The aim of our negotiations is to establish a European framework that would be an instrument for making organisations at national, sectoral and company level more aware of the problem of violence and harassment at work.

The negative consequences of the phenomenon of harassment and violence in the workplace damage not only workers but also the working environment, the operation of the enterprise and its productivity. It is therefore clear that it is in the joint interests of the social partners to find formulae that can help to prevent and deal with such cases when they arise.

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