



# ETUC NEWSLETTER

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CONFEDERATION

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Dear Readers,

The Finnish Presidency of the European Union will be remembered for its conclusion of an issue fundamental to the European trade union movement. After seven years of talks and struggles,

the Council and Parliament reached agreement at second reading and the reform of European legislation on the registration, evaluation and authorisation of chemicals (REACH) was adopted.

This is an important step forward for the health of European workers and citizens. The regulation adopted confirms the principle of reversal of the burden of proof, placing the onus on manufacturers, for the 30,000 or so substances covered by the reform. Industry will now have to provide information on the safety of its substances before they can be placed on the market.

As we saw at the latest European Council, on 14-15 December, the debate on the future of European integration and the Constitutional Treaty will soon be moving into higher gear, in particular during the forthcoming German Presidency of the EU.

Some of the positions taken during discussions on how to break the constitutional stalemate worry us. For example, the idea of a "mini-Treaty" doing away with the Charter of Fundamental Rights has been suggested. For the European trade union movement, dropping the Charter would exacerbate citizens' doubts about the legitimacy of European integration.

That is why we call for an end to such attacks!

We might also point out to the proponents of this mini-reform that taking that route would result in the loss of support from the entire European trade union movement.

Once again, I urge you to [support our petition for quality public services accessible to all](#). Happy holidays to all.

John Monks  
General Secretary

## **SUMMARY**

|   |                                |
|---|--------------------------------|
| ● <a href="#">Editorial</a>                                 | p.1 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">EU news</a>                                   | p.2 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">ETUC news</a>                                 | p.4 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">EU Agenda</a>                                 | p.5 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">ETUC Agenda</a>                               | p.6 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">Dossier on cross-border union cooperation</a> | p.7 <a href="#">Read More</a>  |
| ● <a href="#">Communications</a>                            | p.10 <a href="#">Read More</a> |

**Sign the petition for high-quality public services, accessible to all**

**ETUC  
(European Trade Union Confederation)**  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5  
B-1210 Brussels (Belgium)  
Telephone: +32 (0)2 224 04 11 Fax: +32 (0)2 224 04 54  
E-mail: [media@etuc.org](mailto:media@etuc.org)

[Back <<<](#)

## EU News

### ● **ETUC calls for the EU to set a global example in establishing decent work and fundamental rights - 04/12/2006**

At a **high-level conference on *Promoting decent work for all***, John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation, declared that the **EU can - and must - make a real difference to global development by adhering to high standards in all its external relations, including trade deals.**

The **ETUC was alarmed** by moves outlined in the [European Commission's Communication of October 2006](#) towards bilateral free trade agreements, which appear to give social and environmental objectives a back seat.

According to the ETUC, it is **through trade negotiations** that the **EU can best use its weight to promote good jobs, social protection, workers' rights and conflict prevention worldwide**. The EU must adopt a **coherent strategy** that integrates all its policies.

[ETUC Press release](#)[John Monks' speaking notes](#)

### ● **The ETUC believes it is time for Europe to make a fresh commitment to investment in education and training for workers - 05/12/2006**

Representatives from the ETUC took part in a [meeting of European Union ministers responsible for education and training, in Helsinki](#). They stressed the **need for more action on vocational training and boosting workers' skills**, if Europe is to become a knowledge-based economy.

"The key message from the ETUC is simple," said Confederal Secretary Joël Decaillon, "The EU needs to invest more on education and training at national and European level. **As there are 72 million non-qualified or low-skilled workers in Europe and new jobs will require higher qualifications than before, investment in education and training is a necessity, not a luxury.**"

[ETUC Press release](#)[EU Finnish Presidency press release](#)

### ● **Multistakeholder Forum on CSR in Europe: the ETUC criticises business's unilateral approach - 07/12/2006**

ETUC representatives participated in the **follow-up meeting of the Multistakeholder Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**. While the ETUC respected NGOs' decision not to attend the Forum, and shared many of their concerns, **the European trade union movement decided to participate in order to draw attention to shortcomings in the European concept of CSR.**

As the ETUC has already stressed on a number of occasions, the [Communication on CSR of April 2006](#) betrays the spirit of the Forum, in giving voice to the business side only.

**The ETUC believes that CSR still has a social and economic value that could bring mutual benefit to all stakeholders.** Yet **the Communication's approach dissipates such value and make the whole concept of CSR less credible.** It is far from making Europe a 'pole of excellence', as called for in the Communication.

Since the meeting, European Social Affairs Commissioner Spidla has indicated that he is open to the trade unions' demands. The ETUC hopes that these signals will be followed by concrete action, because otherwise it will be impossible for the ETUC to continue to take part in the Forum.

[ETUC press release](#)

[Back <<<](#)

## ● **The ETUC urges the ECB to end its cycle of monetary tightening - 07/12/2006**

The European Central Bank's (ECB) interest rate move brings **the total increase in policy rates to 1,5% over a period of just one year**. The interest rate hike leads to the **euro exchange rate getting more and too expensive**.

*"It's not high wages or strong worker protection that are chasing industry out of Europe but a too expensive Euro. If European flagships such as Airbus are outsourcing activity to the dollar zone, then **something is very wrong with monetary policy-making**,"* said John Monks.

**The ETUC urges the ECB to end its cycle of monetary tightening** and not to continue with its policy of raising interest rates in 2007.

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

## ● **REACH regulation adopted by the European Parliament: completing an important step forward - 13/12/2006**

**After seven years of debate, the European Parliament adopted the draft reform of EU legislation on the control of chemicals**, with 529 votes in favour, 98 against and 24 abstentions.

**The ETUC welcomes the REACH regulation as a step forward in the management of chemical risks in Europe**, but condemns the intense lobbying by the chemical industry to limit the scope of the reform.

**The law as adopted places the burden of proof firmly on producers for the safety of 30 000 substances covered.** "That marks clear progress, because industry will now have to provide information on the safety of their chemicals before they can put them on the market," said Joel Decaillon, the ETUC's confederal secretary with policy responsibility for REACH.

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

[Back <<<](#)

## ETUC News

### **ETUC demonstrates solidarity with Belgian trade unions after restructuring is announced at the Volkswagen plant in Forest - 02/12/2006**

John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) expressed the **European trade union movement's solidarity with Belgian unions after Volkswagen announced restructuring at its plant in Forest (Brussels)**. He also joined the national demonstration for jobs organised by the three Belgian trade union confederations.

**The ETUC and the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF) wrote to European Commission President José Manuel Barroso** calling for the proposed **European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (GAF)** to be made available to workers who lose their jobs as a result of major industrial disruption within the European Union, as well as relocation outside. **The European Parliament endorsed this change when it adopted the GAF proposal on 13 December.**

[ETUC press release](#)

### **ETUC Executive Committee - 07-08/12/2006**

The ETUC Executive Committee met in Brussels, with a series of important trade union and political issues to discuss. It adopted two **resolutions**, on the **European coordination of collective bargaining in 2007** and the **ETUC contribution to the EU's Growth and Jobs Strategy**. A **resolution responding to the Commission's Communication on Global Europe – Competing in the World** was also approved.

Executive Committee members reaffirmed their support for the [petition in support of public services across Europe](#).

[Back ««](#)

## EU Agenda

### December 2006 – January 2007

|   |                  |  |  |
|---|------------------|--|--|
| ● | 04-05/12/2006    | Informal Education Council (Helsinki)                                  | <a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 04-05/12/2006    | Competitiveness Council (Brussels)                                     | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 04-05/12/2006    | Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)                            | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 11-12/12/2006    | General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)              | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 11-12/12/2006    | Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)            | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 11-14/12/2006    | Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)                | <a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a> |
| ● | 14-15/12/2006    | European Council (Brussels)  | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 18/12/2006       | Environment Council (Brussels)   | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 09/01/2007       | Joint Cabinet Meeting with College of the European Commission (Berlin) | <a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 14-16/01/2007    | Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (Dresden)   | <a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 15-18/01/2007    | Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)                | <a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a> |
| ● | 18-20/01/2007    | Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers (Berlin)   | <a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 22-23/01/2007    | General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)              | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 29/01/2007       | Eurogroup Meeting  | <a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 30/01/2007       | ECOFIN Council (Brussels)  | <a href="#">Council Agenda</a>         |
| ● | 31/01-01/02/2007 | 'Mini-Plenary' Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)           | <a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a> |

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[\*\*Back <<<\*\*](#)

## **ETUC Agenda**

### **December 2006 – January 2007**

- 07/12/2006 ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)
- 07-08/12/2006 ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)
- 09/01/2007 ETUC Press Conference on the Laval case  
(Brussels)
- 21-24/01/2007 OGB Congress (Vienna, Austria)

[Back <<](#)

## Dossier

### ● **Thirty years of cross-border trade union commitment: the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/West Palatinate Interregional Trade Union Council**

As part of our Dossier on the role and activities of the Interregional Trade Union Councils (ITUCs), this month we take a look at the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/West Palatinate ITUC, which has just celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

#### Geographical and historical context

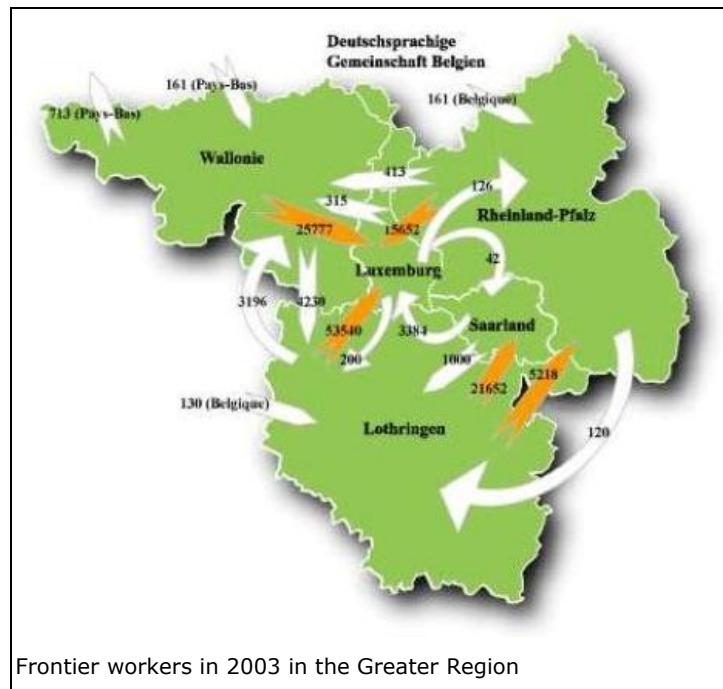
**Founded in 1976, the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/West Palatinate ITUC is the oldest of the 42 ITUCs active in the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).**

It is composed of ETUC member unions, in particular the DGB for Saarland and Rhineland (Germany), the OGB-L and LCGB for Luxembourg, and the CGT, CDFT/UNSA, FO and CFTC for Lorraine (France). It holds a congress every four years and has a rotating presidency. An executive board (one vice-president per organisation) and a presidium (four full members and four alternate members per organisation) make up the organisation's political secretariat. They meet at least quarterly.

**The ITUC aims to serve as a hub for action to promote and defend the social and economic rights of workers, particularly cross-border workers, in the context of what is known as the Greater Region<sup>1</sup>.**

To attain its objectives, **the council develops action programmes and coordinates the activity of its member organisations**. It also participates in the activities of the Greater Region trade union platform.

Set up in 2002 on the initiative of the SLLT/WP ITUC, the trade union platform has the objective of giving labour a stronger voice in the common political structures of the Greater Region. It coordinates the trade union contribution of the two ITUCs<sup>2</sup> **in the Greater Region Economic**



<sup>1</sup>The Greater Region is made up of Saar, Lorraine, Luxembourg, West Palatinate, Wallonia and the German-speaking Community of Belgium. It has over 11 million inhabitants, a working population of 5 million and over 500,000 jobless. Owing to the high level of socio-economic interdependence of these territories, the Region has created common political structures, including the Interregional Parliamentary Council, the Executive Summit and an Economic and Social Committee.

<sup>2</sup>Indeed, in the cross-border Greater Region, which includes all of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, there are two

**and Social Committee.**

### **Cross-border trade union cooperation in action**

The SLLT/WP's political action **aims to make Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg Europe's first economically and socially integrated region.** This is particularly necessary **since the region's cross-border labour market is one of Europe's most integrated.**

The ITUC organises numerous cooperation and **partnership activities to meet its goal, in particular on social protection, lifelong learning and vocational training.**

The SLLT/WP ITUC also organises joint demonstrations. In autumn 2004, for example, it mobilised its affiliates on a number of occasions to demonstrate against the draft directive on services in the internal market (Bolkestein directive). The joint organisation of the May 1st demonstration is an important symbol of cross-border solidarity and a way of showing the cohesion of the trade union members of the SLLT/WP ITUC in the face of common problems.

As part of its training and information activities, **the ITUC organises meetings and conferences that include the participation of specialists**, addressing issues such as reconciling work and family life, education and continuing training in the different national systems, the European Employment Strategy and the potential social impact of the Bolkestein directive.

The SLLT/WP ITUC is involved in improving workers' mobility by combating all types of discrimination and the administrative complications cross-border workers can encounter. With that aim in mind, **it also forms part of the EURES network.**

**Founded in 1993, EURES is a network of cooperation between the European Commission, the public employment services of the European Economic Area member states** (the European Union countries, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein) and other partner organisations. Among the 700 EURES advisers, **the SLLT/WP ITUC has seven EURES union advisers. They provide assistance to frontier workers, particularly for matters related to social protection, labour law and taxation.** They also monitor changes in legislation in the different countries and the labour market situation. This type of service is very important because **workers' mobility is a daily reality in the Greater Region, which has some 200,000 cross-border workers.**



### **A solid base for the future**

**Trade union cooperation in the SLLT/WP ITUC is an important reality for the European trade union movement.** Over and above its day-to-day work and the services it provides to union members, it is of major symbolic value due to the history of the Greater Region, noted the Confederation's President, Karl Heinz Paülgren, at the "Evolution of Labour" conference held in Trier (Germany) for the ITUC's 30th anniversary. **This example of interregional solidarity**

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interregional trade union councils: Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/West Palatinate (SLLT/WP ITUC) and "Three Frontiers", created in 1987. The SLLT/WP ITUC covers a region with around five million inhabitants situated in three countries: Germany, France and Luxembourg. The Three Frontiers ITUC covers a region with 120,000 inhabitants in three countries: Belgium, France and Luxembourg.

**and collaboration represents a solid basis for unions as they take up the new challenges of today's world.** Similarly, it confirms that the struggle to improve workers' living and working conditions does not end at borders. On the contrary, it represents a driving force for the integration of Europe and for building a more social Europe.

In an enlarging Europe, the success of the SLLT/WP ITUC can serve as a model for new trade union cooperation structures and is an essential element of European trade unionism.

Links:

- **Website of the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/West Palatinate Interregional Trade Union Council:** <http://www.csi-igr.net/>
- **Website of the Greater Region:** <http://www.grande-region.net/>

For more information:

- **Karl Heinz Paügen**, President of the Saar-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/West Palatinate Interregional Trade Union Council: [karlheinz.paeulgen@dgb.de](mailto:karlheinz.paeulgen@dgb.de)

[Back <<<](#)

## Communications



### **Publications- recent Commission documents**

The following reports are now available:

- [Convergence Report December 2006](#) (06/12);
- [Green Paper on Trade Defence Instruments](#) (06/12);
- Report [« The Industrial Relations in Europe 2006 »](#) (08/12);
- [« A year of delivery » - The European Commission's 2006 Annual Progress Report on Growth and Jobs](#) (12/12);
- [First results of the Eurobarometer Survey n°66](#) (18/12).

The European Commission plans to issue these publications in January 2007:

- Communication on climate change policy options for 2020 and beyond (10/01);
- Ambitious Energy Review Package (10/01).



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

The following documents are now available:

- [South East Europe Review n° 2006/2](#)

Editorial team  
*Managing Editor:* John Monks  
*Editor-in-chief:* Patricia Grillo  
*Editors:* Daniele Melli, Kate Holman