



ETUC NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers,

2007 will be a very important year for European construction and the European trade union movement.

The European Union, which now has 27 Member States since being enlarged to include Bulgaria and Romania, is preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of its founding treaty.

The declaration that our political decision-makers will be adopting next March at the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome will be the opportunity to test their determination to drive forward the process of European integration, which has now been blocked for two years. The establishment of a roadmap by the new German EU presidency as a way out of the constitutional impasse represents a step in the right direction, but the outcome of this process is far from guaranteed, and calls for the commitment of all the parties involved.

The European trade union movement is monitoring these debates very closely and ensuring that social Europe and workers' rights are at the heart of the future of European construction. For too long, we have been witnessing the marginalisation of social questions and the erosion of workers' rights. A Europe based solely on profit and competitiveness at any price has now revealed all its limitations. We are convinced that it is time to change tack, and we have decided to shift on to the offensive to promote a more social Europe, with greater solidarity, based on sustainable development. That is the slogan of our statutory congress to be held from 21 to 24 May in Seville. This major event, which will be a milestone for the European trade union movement, will allow us the opportunity to discuss our future, and the future of social Europe and of the world of work in Europe.

Best wishes for the new year 2007.

John Monks
General Secretary

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EU News

Energy and climate change package: good objectives, but inadequate measures - 11/01/2007

On 10 January the European Commission published [an integrated energy and climate change package](#). **The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomed the adoption of independent targets for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in the European Union by 2020.** However, it believes the continuing pursuit of electricity and gas market liberalisation, through the 'ownership unbundling' of network activities and distribution, to be "reckless".

Europe needs public authorities to undertake an industrial policy that combines the planning of investment, research and development, worker training and regulation of energy prices. The ETUC is more positive about the proposals on climate policy. It welcomes in particular the idea of an independent target for reduction of the EU's emissions by 2020.

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

Publication of the Trade Union Memorandum to the German EU Presidency - 17/01/2007

The ETUC published the **Trade Union Memorandum to the German Presidency of the European Union**. This document **lists the key priorities for action that the German EU Presidency should follow over the coming six months.**

The European trade union movement lays emphasis on finding a solution to the deadlock over the **Constitutional Treaty**, and on **energy** issues.

In addition, **the social progress and stronger social cohesion** in Europe are themes the current EU Presidency should not neglect.

The ETUC calls on the Presidency **to push forward with some key legislative measures**, including **reform of the Working Time Directive, progress on the stalled Temporary Agency Workers Directive**, and overdue **revision of the European Works Council Directive**.

In February, John Monks will meet Angela Merkel, together with its German trade union affiliate, the DGB, to present the trade union demands.

[ETUC Press release](#)[Trade Union Memorandum to the German Presidency](#)

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Meeting with the social 'troika': the quality of work has to be at the heart of the flexicurity discussion - 18/01/2007

The **ETUC, the other European social partners and the European Social Platform met the social 'troika'** (Employment and Social Affairs Ministers of Germany, Portugal and Slovenia) before the informal meeting of EU Employment and Social Affairs Ministers. Leading the trade union delegation, **John Monks urged leaders to promote better jobs and to stop the spread of precarious work.**

European leaders must listen to the 80% of workers who say that **the security of their job is the most important aspect of good work**, he added.

The trade union delegation urged employment ministers **to undertake a joint report on the quality of work in Europe and to present and discuss this under the Portuguese Presidency** in the context of the debate on flexicurity.



Source: www.eu2007.de



[ETUC Press release](#)

[EU German Presidency Press release](#)

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ETUC News

Presentation of the ETUC "decent work - decent life" strategy at the World Social Forum - 19/01/2007

A delegation from the ETUC participated in the **World Social Forum (WSF) in Nairobi**. The ETUC representatives focused on **"decent work - decent life"** and presented trade union strategies in support of poor and unemployed people.

The ETUC delegation took part in seminars on migration, relations between the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries and multinational companies and also joined the big demonstration organised by the WSF promoters on 20 January.



[ETUC press release](#)

Gender equality in labour markets: official presentation of the implementation of the European social partners joint strategy - 30/01/2007

On the eve of the launch of the [European Year of Equal Opportunities for All](#) in Berlin, **the European social partners – ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME et CEEP – presented the first report on the implementation of their joint strategy for gender equality in labour markets.**

This report describes the follow-up actions undertaken by the European social partners at European, national, cross-industry, sectoral and company levels. The range of actions includes the **negotiation of collective agreements**, the **design of new gender equality policies** and **the development of projects tackling gender gaps.**



[Joint ETUC-BUSINESSEUROPE-UEAPME-CEEP press release](#)

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EU Agenda

January – February 2007

●	09/01/2007	Joint Cabinet Meeting with College of the European Commission (Berlin)	Meeting Agenda
●	14-16/01/2007	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (Dresden)	Meeting Agenda
●	15-18/01/2007	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary Session Agenda
●	18-20/01/2007	Informal Meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers (Berlin)	Meeting Agenda
●	22-23/01/2007	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	29/01/2007	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
●	30/01/2007	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	31/01-01/02/2007	'Mini-Plenary' Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary Session Agenda
●	11/02/2007	Informal Meeting of Trade Ministers (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
●	12-13/02/2007	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	12-15/02/2007	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary Session Agenda
●	15/02/2007	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	15-16/02/2007	Council Justice and Home Affairs (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	16/02/2007	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	19/02/2007	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	20/02/2007	Environment Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	22/02/2007	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
●	26/02/2007	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
●	27/02/2007	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda

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ETUC Agenda

January - February 2007

- 09/01/2007 ETUC Press Conference on the Laval Case (Brussels)
- 21-24/01/2007 OGB Congress (Vienna, Austria)
- 6-7/02/2007 Conference "Decent work and European market integration - a contradiction?" (Brussels) [Conference Programme](#)
- 08/02/2007 ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)
- 08-10/02/2007 Podkrepa Congress (Bulgaria)
- 20-21/02/2007 Conference « What jobs in a low carbon European economy ? » (Brussels) [Conference Programme](#)
- 28/02/2007 Extraordinary meeting of the Group II « Workers » of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)

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Communications

Press Conference on the Laval Case - 08/01/2007

On the day the European Court of Justice discussed the Laval Case, the **European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the Swedish Trade Union LO organised a press conference**, attended by a number of journalists. ETUC General Secretary **John Monks** and LO Sweden Vice-President **Erland Olauson** explained their positions on the case. The European trade union movement believes **the key issue in the Laval Case** to be that of **preventing inequality of treatment for workers, especially in the context of EU enlargement**.



[ETUC Press release](#)



[Dossier on the Laval Case](#)

Publications- recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- Communication « [An Energy Policy for Europe](#) » (10/01);
- Special Eurobarometer Survey « [Discrimination in the European Union](#) » (23/01).

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

- Internal Market Scoreboard (01/02);
- Interim Economic Forecasts (16/02);
- New strategy on health and safety at work 2007-2012 (21/02).

Publications- recent documents of the European Trade Union Confederation

The following documents are now available:

- [Structural reforms and macro-economic policy](#)

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Interview

Interview with Reiner Hoffmann, European Trade Union Confederation Deputy General Secretary

Reiner Hoffman is part of the ETUC secretariat team elected at the last Congress in Prague in 2003. He has responsibility for handling economic and financial issues, macro-economic dialogue, and industrial policies.



1) On 1 January 2007 Germany started its term as President of the European Union. Among the most important issues to deal with is the future of the Constitutional Treaty. In your view, what will be the Presidency's approach on the Constitution? What are the European trade union movement's current demands on this question?

Reiner Hoffman (RH): The ETUC is pleased to see that the EU German Presidency is laying emphasis on the future of the Constitutional Treaty, but we make it quite clear that we will never accept a 'mini-treaty' – proposed by French presidential candidate Nicolas Sarkozy - without the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights integrated into the Constitution.

The ETUC took a position in support of the full European Constitution, which takes a step forward in reinforcing Social Europe and the rights of workers, and it continues to stick to that view. If the constitutional package is going to be reopened in light of the upcoming debate on how to resolve the deadlock, the ETUC will defend its position.

We are quite worried about the direction the current discussion is taking. After the double referendum rejection, we welcomed German Chancellor Angela Merkel's proposal to add a Social Protocol to the Constitution. Now, the idea of a mini-treaty leaving out the Charter of Fundamental Rights is gathering support and the mood is changing, with a growing number of politicians wanting to eradicate all features of a 'Constitution' as such. The ETUC rejects these attacks and makes it clear to those who advocate this mini-treaty that, in so doing, they are jeopardising the support of the entire European trade union movement. The ETUC expressed this view to the German Chancellor in a joint letter with its German affiliate, the DGB, in November 2006.

2) Apart from the Constitutional Treaty, what are the other topics the German Presidency should prioritise, in your view? Is Social Europe on the Presidency agenda? What does the ETUC expect from the German Presidency?

RH: The ETUC welcomes the fact that the social dimension of the EU has been put on the agenda of the German Presidency. In her speech to the European Parliament, Angela Merkel underlined the importance of the European Social Model, which has been questioned in the recent past, for example by the UK Presidency in 2005. We have also welcomed the German Presidency's decision to put the urgent question of the quality of work in Europe at the centre of the agenda. Nevertheless we regret that no concrete social projects will be dealt with.

In the view of the ETUC it is important for the EU to give a clear signal about what flexicurity should mean in practice. We are ready to contribute to the debate on flexicurity if, and only if, there are benefits for the workers and not only for business. However, every day workers are experiencing the growth of precarious employment in Europe, and every day we are facing demands from employers to prolong working time and to reduce wages. In such an environment of insecurity citizens have lost confidence in the European project,

and so the German Presidency should do everything possible to demonstrate that Europe is good not only for business.

One concrete project for the German Presidency should be to try to achieve a breakthrough on the temporary agency workers legislation. Trade unions are not generally against new forms of work contracts, but it's crucial that there is no discrimination in comparison to so-called standard work contracts. The equal treatment of temporary agency workers is a vital element of flexicurity. Another concrete project is the revision of the Working Time Directive - currently blocked in the Council of Ministers. The ETUC would deeply regret it if a country holding the Presidency, and keen to promote the quality of jobs, avoided taking any steps on an important issue like the Working Time Directive.

The German Presidency also has a chance to push forward with the urgently needed revision of the European Works Council Directive. It was in 1994 that an earlier German Presidency got this important piece of European labour law onto the statute book. Now we have more than 800 European Works Councils, but we know from daily experience that improvements are urgently needed to enable European Works Councils to deal adequately with restructuring.

Experience has shown us that in many companies, information and consultation procedures have been undertaken after crucial management decisions have been taken. European Works Councils have not had the chance to have a real influence on company policy. The Volkswagen case is only the latest and most high-profile in a wave of restructuring examples where employees are the ones who pay the higher price. Looking at the experiences of recent years, we ask the German Presidency to take up the issue of launching the revision with the European Commission.

3) At the next spring European Summit on the Lisbon Strategy for growth and employment, the social partners will meet the European institutions in the framework of the tripartite social summit. What do you think about the way the Lisbon Strategy is being implemented?

RH: If the German Presidency takes the social dimension seriously, the debate at the EU's Spring Council meeting on the Lisbon Strategy should make crystal clear that it is not enough to continue with the business-friendly policies it has pursued of late, for example in the area of so-called 'better regulation'. More and better jobs have to be put at the forefront of policy.

The Lisbon agenda, as defined by the European Council in 2000, took a progressive approach to the question of European competitiveness, more and better jobs, social cohesion and sustainable development. However, the 2005 mid-term review and the relaunch of the Lisbon process have fundamentally changed these objectives. The new European policy agenda is prioritising the pillar of competitiveness over the pillar of social cohesion. Instead of regaining ownership of the strategy - which was one objective of the review - the social partners' involvement in its implementation has been weakened in many Member States. The German Presidency must make sure that the social partners' involvement is not viewed any longer as a burden but as one of the preconditions for the success of the strategy. In the run-up to the 2007 Spring Council we intend to intervene along three fundamental lines: first, demanding that the downgrading of the social partners' role in the Lisbon agenda should be reversed; secondly, to make sure that the growth recovery continues; and thirdly to focus policy attention on reducing the incidence of precarious work in Europe.

Another important issue for the summit will be energy. The ETUC will ask the German Presidency to carry forward the work on the common European energy strategy. Energy efficiency, energy conservation and an increased share of renewable energy need to be at the centre of such a European strategy.

4) Since December 2005 we have seen regular increases in the interest rates set by the European Central Bank (ECB). The ETUC has repeatedly called on the ECB to stop these hikes, but the bank in Frankfurt has maintained its line. Furthermore, for some months now, public opinion in some of the euro zone countries has been more and more critical of Europe's economic governance, and in particular the role of the ECB and the general economic orientation adopted by the European institutions. Is this disapproval justified? What is the European trade union movement's position on this issue? What are the negative consequences of ECB policy for European workers? What are the future risks if this policy continues?

RH: The economic situation has improved, and Europe is back on the growth track. But to make sure that economic growth will be sustainable, the German Presidency should give precedence to the better coordination of macroeconomic policy. In this respect, the ETUC expects that the Macroeconomic Dialogue will be further improved, and a clear signal should be given to the European Central Bank not to raise interest rates, since this could disrupt the growth path of the EU. At the same time the reformed Stability and Growth Pact should be implemented by modulating fiscal consolidation to take into account the need to continue robust growth. The ambition of the German Presidency should be to pursue economic policies that will create the conditions for Europe to repeat the 1997-2000 growth cycle, which will reduce levels of unemployment significantly.

Trade unions are aware that in the macroeconomic context wages play a crucial role, and unions have practised a very moderate collective bargaining policy over the last decade. There is at present no danger of so-called 'second round' effects leading to rapid inflation. On the other hand we have to make it much clearer that workers should also gain from the economic success of European companies. In many Member States, the working poor are on the increase, and therefore the ETUC urges the German Presidency to give attention to the debate on minimum wages. Wages are important on the one hand to guarantee workers a decent life, but at the same time they are also a significant demand factor which can stimulate the economic growth path even further.

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