



ETUC NEWSLETTER

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Dear Readers,

'Flexicurity' will unquestionably be the key debate over the coming months at European level.

This debate is essential for the future of the European social model. The challenge facing us is to wield a decisive influence from the outset of the discussion by defining our own concept of 'flexicurity' through clear objectives and measures to tackle the problem of precarious employment and a call for genuine guarantees of security for professional career paths as well as quality jobs.

The forthcoming Tripartite Social Summit will offer us the opportunity to make some proposals and shift on to the offensive, for 'flexicurity' is to be one of the subjects on the agenda of this meeting.

We regard the clarification of this concept as a priority in order to be able to assess the commitment of the various parties on flexibility and security. This is important, because obscuring the issue would merely make Europe unpopular.

Elsewhere, the European Union will shortly be celebrating an important milestone: the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome. On this occasion, we have prepared a statement calling upon European decision-makers to commit themselves to more social Europe, an essential prerequisite if we are to garner citizen support for the building of Europe.

John Monks
General Secretary

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EU News

● **Relaunch of the EU Strategy on Health and Safety at work is essential - 21/02/2007**

The European Commission has published its [new Strategy for Health and Safety at work for 2007-2013](#).

Although the objective of a 25% reduction in the rate of accidents at work in the European Union appears ambitious, **it is nonetheless the poorest strategy, in terms of concrete initiatives, proposed since 1978.**

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) points out that accidents form only a limited part of the health problems caused by work.

The ETUC regrets that diseases linked to work are not considered in the Commission communication. The Commission seems to approach occupational health primarily as an aspect of the productivity and competitiveness of businesses.

According to the ETUC, **a real prevention strategy is necessary. It has to be based on some precise measures**, such as **worker representation, factory inspections and prevention services**.

The Commission seems to have forgotten the Treaty, which advocates harmonisation of the workplace environment via Community directives. It focuses on recommendations, which have proved to be ineffective in practice, and other non-binding instruments. After five years of procrastination, **the ETUC would have liked the Commission to come up with a more precise idea of the 'possible initiatives'.**

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

● **The Commission's joint report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion shows that the EU should do more and better - 22/02/2007**

The European Commission this month presented its [Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion](#) to the [Employment and Social Affairs Council](#).

The report shows that **one European in six is now living below the poverty line**.

To improve this situation, the ETUC believes Member States must **urgently reinforce some of the policies they are currently implementing**.

If the EU wants to achieve its objective of eradicating poverty by 2010, then the Member States must not only redouble their efforts, but they must also, and above all, reorientate some of the policies that are having the opposite effect to their declared aims.

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

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ETUC News

● **First meeting of the young European social partners - 02-03/02/2007**

For the first time, some 70 young trade unionists from the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and employers from 'YES for Europe' gathered for a joint conference entitled '**Young European social partners: challenges and perspectives**'.

The aim of the conference was to enable both sides to get to know one another better, in order to deal with the more general challenges posed by the European Union in a global context.



[ETUC press release](#)

● **ETUC Steering Committee - 08/02/2007**

The Steering Committee of the ETUC met in Brussels in February.

Among the many items on the agenda were the preparation of the Spring Council and the [petition for public services](#).

● **Meeting with the German EU Presidency - 27/02/2007**

An ETUC delegation including President **Cándido Méndez**, General Secretary **John Monks** and **Michael Sommer**, President of the DGB (Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund) met **German Chancellor Angela Merkel** in Berlin, **to put forward the trade unions' key demands for the coming months**.

Creating more and better jobs is top of the trade union agenda.

In the ETUC's view, **flexicurity is only acceptable if it leads to improvements in the quality of work and an end to the expansion of precarious jobs**. Flexibility must not take priority over security.

In addition, **the ETUC is pressing the German Presidency to pursue a way out of the current constitutional impasse**, but not at any price. "We will never accept a 'mini-treaty' that does not integrate the *Charter of Fundamental Rights*," warned John Monks.



[ETUC Press release](#)



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

● **First EU Social Partners joint seminar in Turkey on Social Dialogue - 22-23/02/2007**

ETUC, in partnership with **BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP** organized a joint seminar in Istanbul. The seminar aimed at supporting Turkish social partners to identify their needs at the national level in order to improve their capacities and act effectively to fully represent their members in the **European Social Dialogue**. Three of the main representative **Turkish trade unions, TURK-IS, HAK-IS and DISK** gathered together with **representatives of Turkish employers' organisations** and stressed the need to ensure the full



respect of trade union rights of association and committed themselves to strengthening their efforts in organizing key economic sectors (such as the textile, shoes and food sector). The European Social partner organizations gave information on EU social dialogue developments and procedures. This seminar was the first of four events that the European social partner organisations will jointly organise during 2007, on the basis of their 2nd Integrated Project, co-financed by the European Commission. The next seminar will be held on 28-29 March in Bulgaria.

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EU Agenda

February - March 2007

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
01-02/03/2007	Informal Meeting of Education Ministers (Heidelberg)	Meeting Agenda
05-06/03/2007	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
08-09/03/2007	European Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
12-15/03/2007	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary Session Agenda
12-13/03/2007	Informal Meeting of EU Ministers for Development Cooperation and Informal ACP-EU Dialogue on Economic Partnership Agreements (Bonn)	Meeting Agenda
16/03/2007	Euro-Mediterranean Partnership Labour and Social Affairs (Berlin)	Meeting Agenda
22-23/03/2007	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
24-25/03/2007	Informal Meeting of the Heads of State and Government (Berlin)	Meeting Agenda
26/03/2007	Eurogroup (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
27/03/2007	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
28-29/03/2007	'Mini-plenary' Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary Session Agenda
30-31/03/2007	Informal Meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers (Bremen)	Meeting Agenda

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ETUC Agenda

February - March 2007

● 02-03/02/2007	Conference « Young European social partners: challenges and perspectives » (Brussels)	
● 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	Podkrepia Congress (Bulgaria)	
● 20-21/02/2007	Conference « What jobs in a low carbon European economy ? » (Brussels)	Conference Programme
● 26-27/02/2007	Workshop « The EU Constitution – The next steps » (Brussels)	
● 27/02/2007	ETUC Meeting with the EU German Presidency (Berlin)	
● 06/03/2007	Conference « What Energy policy for the EU ? » (Brussels)	Conference Programme
● 19/03/2007	Pan-European regional Council Foundation (PERC) (Rome)	
● 20/03/2007	ETUC Steering Committee (Rome)	
● 20-21/03/2007	ETUC Executive Committee (Rome)	

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Communications



Conference 'Jobs in a low carbon Europe' - 20-21/02/2007

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) organised a conference entitled '**Jobs in a low carbon Europe**' with the participation, among others, of **Vladimir Spidla**, EU Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner, **Stavros Dimas**, EU Environment Commissioner, **Christina Narbona**, Spanish Environment Minister and **David Miliband**, UK Secretary of State for Environment. During this event, the ETUC presented the **results of research carried out in 11 European countries detailing the impact of climate change on employment**.



This is the first time a systematic study has been made of measures to combat climate change and their impact on employment. It specifically analyses the implications in different sectors of the economy: energy generation, transport, iron and steel, cement, housing and construction, which alone account for over 80% of greenhouse gas emissions.

[Read More](#)

[ETUC press release](#)



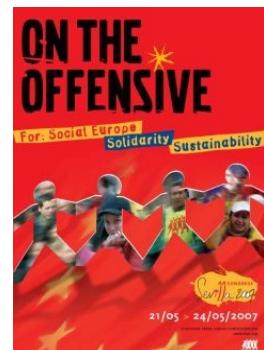
11th statutory Congress of the ETUC

The ETUC will hold its **11th statutory Congress from 21 to 24 May, in Seville, Spain**.

Some 1,000 delegates representing all the ETUC's affiliate organisations will take part.

This major event in the European trade union calendar will debate the challenges that European trade unions are facing at the present time and define the strategies to be adopted over the coming four years.

In addition, a dedicated website will be online from the middle of March. There you will find more details of the programme and the issues for debate.



ETUC Workshop on the future of the EU Constitution - 26-27/02/2007

The ETUC and the European Trade Union Institute for Research, Education and Health and Safety organised a **workshop on the future of the EU Constitution**.

Officials of the European trade union movement, academics and members of the European Parliament **examined the state of the current debate on the EU Constitution and put forward ideas for a way out of the existing impasse**.

The European trade union movement believes that the existing draft Constitution represents a step forward for Social Europe and workers' rights and will never accept a 'mini-treaty' that does not integrate the Charter of Fundamental Rights.



Publications- recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [Internal Market Scoreboard](#) (01/02);
- [Interim Economic Forecasts](#) (16/02);
- [New Strategy on Health and Safety at work 2007-2012](#) (21/02).

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Dossier

Unionisation in Italy

As part of our dossier on unionisation, this issue looks at Italy.

With a rate of unionisation hovering around 35%, Italy is above the [European average](#). The three national confederations, the General Italian Confederation of labour ([CGIL](#)), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions ([CISL](#)) and the Italian Labour Union ([UIL](#)) - all three of them members of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) - are very active in this context. Faced with a constantly evolving society, a union has to adapt to changes. This is the common approach on unionising that the three Italian confederations have decided to adopt. Structural changes due to globalisation, and the growth of migration, have helped to change the context in which Italian trade unions operate.

Likewise, since the early 1990s, we have seen a major shift in Italian labour law: new types of contracts, essentially precarious one, have appeared. At the same time, Italy has shifted from being a land of emigration to a land of immigration. These factors have led the trade unions to set up new activities and to develop new structures to increase their members, while seeking to reach 'new' categories of people, such as precarious or non-typical workers and migrants.

Services are more and more personalised

Unionisation in the three Italian organisations is handled direct by the union representatives elected in their workplaces and the trade union delegates. Each sectoral federation organises activities, supervised and coordinated by the confederation. The broad presence of the trade union organisations, not only within enterprises and production sites but also across the country, is a fundamental element. The three Italian confederations rely on thousands of local bases which play an important social role on the ground.

The commitment of the union representatives¹, coupled with a strong presence on Italian soil, form the core elements in the unionisation activities, but they are not the only ones.

Faced with socio-economic changes over the past 20 years, and the crisis in the system of conventional industrial relations, the Italian unions have developed some fresh activities to demonstrate their social relevance. The CGIL, CISL and UIL offer a range of services and structures for individuals in order to respond to the new needs of workers.

These structures form part of the 'service systems' available to members². They include advice facilities on issues linked to taxation or pensions, consumer help services, and legal aid in the event of a dispute in the workplace.

Anyone may benefit from these facilities, but union members enjoy special rates.

These personalised services also allow the unions to reach new categories of people who have remained largely untouched by the union movement hitherto. To many citizens, these services and these structures represent their first contact with the unions. This first contact often stimulates these people to take the initiative and join a union.

¹ Union representatives are directly elected every two years by all the workers in the workplaces. Every worker is both an elector and a potential candidate. During the last elections, representatives supported by the CGIL, CISL and UIL obtained 92% of the votes.

² The systems of services offered by the three Italian trade union confederations are organised around such structures as the 'Patronati' [INCA-CGIL](#), [INAS-CISL](#) and [ITAL-UIL](#), active in individual support for workers with regard to rights linked to pensions, social protection and social assistance.

Migrant workers

According to the most recent statistics available from the Italian National Statistical Institute (ISTAT), the number of migrant workers stood at approximately 1,225,000 workers in the fourth quarter of 2005: in Italy, they now represent 5.4% of the total³ workforce.

The growth in the number of migrant workers has been a constant feature over several years. Even more surprisingly, the rate of employment among migrant workers (65.4%) is higher than among Italians (57.4%) in the 15-64 age bracket. In light of this trend, the unions have acted to represent these workers and defend their rights.

Migrants can join trade unions at three levels: confederal, sectoral and individual. Since the end of the 1980s, the CGIL, CISL and UIL have put in place trade union policies for migrants, with the aim of providing confederal support for the actions conducted by the sectoral federations.

The sectoral federations include the migrant workers in their unionisation policies, in close cooperation with the 'immigration' departments organised at the confederal level. With regard to collective bargaining agreements, all employees are represented by the union organisations with no distinction of any kind between migrants and Italian workers.

When it comes to individual assistance, especially to tackle the specific problems faced by migrant workers, the Italian unions have set up *ad hoc* structures, notably the CGIL's '[Migrants' centres](#)', the [National Association Across Borders \(ANOLF\)](#) promoted by the CISL and the UIL's [ITAL migrants](#). These structures are open to all migrant citizens, and help them with any problem relating to obtaining or renewing work permits, dealing with practical issues such as family links, and information on the Italian social protection system.

These structures represent a very important bridge between the union and migrants. Opening up to the 'new' workers coming from abroad has been important in terms of trade union membership levels. The ANOLF, for example, has helped to bring the CISL over 175,000 migrant workers. Migrant workers, for their part, represent eight per cent of the workers affiliated to the CGIL.

Dialogue with workers in precarious jobs

Since the early 1990s, work has become significantly more precarious in Italy. Several reforms to labour law have led to non-typical work contracts, particularly in the services sector.

The introduction of precarious contracts has made workers' lives more insecure. Faced with this new situation, the Italian trade union movement regards it as important to recruit these non-typical workers.

When temporary work was introduced in Italy (1998), the three Italian trade union confederations set up structures to tackle the problems of non-typical workers. This meant the creation of: [New labour identities \(NIDIL-CGIL\)](#), [the Association of Non-typical and temporary workers \(ALAI-CISL\)](#) and the [Co-ordination for the employment of non-typical workers \(CPO-UIL\)](#). The purpose of these structures is to represent this new category of workers and to meet their needs.

They provide several personalised services for their members. In particular, the desks offer information on non-typical work contracts, advice on taxation and social security, or perhaps support in the event of disputes at work.

Likewise, those signing up to these various structures (NIDIL-CGIL, ALAI-CISL or CPO-UIL) can enjoy the services set up by the three confederations for all workers who are union members.

Aside from the desire to create a link between non-typical work and trade unionism, the purpose of these activities is to help get these non-typical contracts changed into normal contracts, and to keep workers in the union once their situation has stopped being precarious.

The three structures set up for non-typical workers have seen their memberships increase exponentially and have quickly established themselves as the essential point of contact for precarious workers.

³ According to other sources, this figure is far higher because of the many undeclared migrant workers.

Food for thought

The Italian trade unions have successfully carved a unionising role for themselves, despite a difficult socio-economic context. The development of subcontracting in public and private enterprises represents an obstacle to unionisation. Similarly, the increasingly precarious nature of the world of work is complicating the activities of unions.

However, the Italian trade unions are recording some success in terms of unionisation, for they have been able to react and face up to the economic and social changes. They are present in society at every level, while being influential at the national level.

Their commitment to migrant workers and those in precarious situations has allowed the Italian trade unions to establish themselves as the prime partners vis-à-vis other players.

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