



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)  
Confédération européenne des syndicats (CES)

# ETUC NEWSLETTER

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Dear readers,







August's financial crisis was far from being an isolated event. The queues outside the banks, notably in the United Kingdom, brought back some painful memories ... This crisis shows us once again the dangers of financial capitalism and the consequences that it has on the real economy.

Since the directive on worker information and consultation in 2001, social Europe has stalled. That is why the debate that is continuing about the Charter of Fundamental Rights is crucial. The recent bids to tone down the content and the scope of the Charter are causing us concern. Accordingly, we are pursuing our efforts with the European decision-makers to call for clear recognition of the role of the social partners and the social dialogue, and for binding legal value across all the Member States.

The debates underway about flexicurity give us the opportunity to reaffirm that the quality of work needs to be at the centre of the policies.

John Monks  
General Secretary

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## ETUC News

### Trade union mobilisation for sustainable mobility

14/09/2007 - **'Reclaiming the streets for people'** was the slogan for the **sixth annual European Mobility Week** (16-22 September).

The latest figures show that travel to and from work makes up 30% of urban journeys.

**The European trade union movement wants to play a full role in the debate on mobility.**

Two elements are essential to making a serious contribution to the fight against climate change: we need to **encourage sustainable mobility** and **to improve the management of workers' daily commuting journeys.**

Likewise, **the ETUC proposes that companies over a certain size should be required to appoint a mobility officer** and develop mobility plans, with workers' representatives fully involved in the process.



[ETUC press release](#)



[ETUC study on 'Climate change and employment'](#)

### The Charter of Fundamental Rights needs to be legally binding

20/09/2007 - The ETUC Executive Committee has confirmed its support for the **binding character of the Charter of Fundamental Rights.**

The European trade union movement is concerned at the efforts to weaken the Charter and dilute its impact on the Member States.

**John Monks has written to the Presidents of the Commission and the Council, asking for urgent confirmation of the legally binding character of the Charter.**

Addressing a meeting of MEPs in the European Parliament in Strasbourg, John Monks also called for **proper recognition of the key role of the social partners and the social dialogue** which are essential elements of the European Social Model.

These are the minimum conditions for workers' support for the Reform Treaty.



[ETUC Press release](#)

### Military repression in Burma: ETUC issues strong condemnation

26/09/2007 - In Burma, **peaceful demonstrations** calling for a **return to democracy** were **violently repressed by the military.**

**The ETUC has firmly condemned this repression and has invited the EU to apply effective sanctions against the regime.** *"It is inconceivable that the trade talks with the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) group, which includes Burma, can continue unaffected by this situation,"* declared John Monks.



[ETUC press release](#)

## ETUC News

### **Violation of fundamental rights in Turkey: ETUC and ITUC express solidarity with the workers of Novamed - 27/09/2007**

**For a whole year, the women workers of Novamed, a Turkish company with German owners established in Antalya, have been on strike to protest against the inhuman treatment they are suffering.**

The **Women's Committees** of the **ETUC** and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) **express their full support and solidarity with the women workers and demand that the discrimination and harassment towards them cease.**

The ITUC and ETUC **invite the employers to recognise the union and start negotiations** on a proper settlement to the situation, which would protect the employment of all the workers.



[Joint ETUC and ITUC press release](#)

### **Commission's second stage consultation on the reconciliation of professional, private and family life, with the social partners**

Last July, in response to the European Commission's **second stage consultation on the reconciliation of professional, private and family life**, the European social partners agreed to set up a joint working group within the context of the European social dialogue, **to carry out an evaluation of all the elements of their framework agreement on parental leave.**

They also committed themselves to making an assessment of parental leave arrangements that relate to other measures supporting parents and work-life balance. **This evaluation process will be carried out in cooperation with their respective national member organisations.** The ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP and UEAPME will report on progress made to the Commission and assess whether or not joint actions need to be taken, before the Tripartite Social Summit of March 2008.

### **ETUC conference on restructuring**

In the framework of the restructuring project, **ETUC held a major conference on 10 and 11 September in Lisbon.**

Almost 80 participants exchanged opinions on the challenges facing the trade union movement in terms of anticipating change and/or managing its social and economic consequences.

For the ETUC, represented by Deputy General Secretary Maria Helena André, the issues raised by restructuring operations and the links with employment and other policies highlight **the need to implement change in a way that goes hand in hand with safeguarding salaried workers' employability and facilitating their transition to jobs of the same or better quality.**

Anticipating, managing and monitoring restructuring processes require active involvement by all the actors concerned. Any such actions must be based on clear synergies between political, legislative, contractual and financial instruments.

The ETUC is developing a toolkit on this issue that will soon be made available to member organisations.

## ETUC Agenda

### September - October 2007

09-10/09/2007	TUC Congress (Brighton)	<a href="#">Congress Agenda</a>
10-11/09/2007	Conference 'Trade Unions and Restructuring in Europe' (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Conference Agenda</a>
19/09/2007	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
26/09/2007	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
09-10/10/2007	Conference 'MSD: ETUC goes on the offensive against European workers' biggest health problem' (Brussels)	<a href="#">Conference Agenda</a>
17/10/2007	ETUC Steering Committee (Lisbon)	
17-18/10/2007	ETUC Executive Committee (Lisbon)	
24/10/2007	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
26-27/10/2007	Trade Union Conference EU - Africa (Lisbon)	
28-31/10/2007	LO Denmark Congress (Copenhagen)	<a href="#">Congress Agenda</a>
30/10/2007	Extraordinary meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	

## EU News

### **No to flexploitation, yes to a strong social dimension in the internal market**

13/09/2007 - The [conference on 'Flexicurity: key challenges'](#) organised by the Portuguese presidency of the EU in Lisbon revived the debate at European level on flexicurity.

The ETUC seized this opportunity to indicate the essential elements to avoid a situation where **flexicurity is transformed into 'flexploitation'**, namely a level playing field both in terms of protecting workers from unfair competition and in terms of taxation, and also growth-friendly macroeconomic policies.

The ETUC considers that **the Commission needs to pledge to give the internal market a strong social dimension.**

The key elements of a strong social dimension in the internal market are the following: the introduction of a directive on temporary work based on the **principle of 'equal pay for equal work'**, the **right to flexible working hours in order to improve work/life balance**, and **the right to full-time work for involuntary part-time workers.**



[ETUC press release](#)



[Commission press release](#)

### **Energy: a legislative package that does not meet the challenges - 20/09/2007**

The **'third legislative package' on energy** published by the Commission is **incompatible with the protection of European consumers and the fight against climate change.**

Without taking account of the negative experiences recorded in various countries, the **Commission persists in recommending separation of ownership between the electricity and gas networks and the distribution and production activities.** This approach **undermines security of supply and runs counter to the deployment of renewable energy sources.**

**The social consequences are also liable to be substantial.**

On the other hand, the European energy model needs to be reformed via a public industrial policy combining a programme of investments, research and development and energy price regulation. In a nutshell, **we need to develop cooperation rather than competition.**



[ETUC press release](#)



[Commission press release](#)

### **The extension of the EPA negotiations is indispensable - 27/09/2007**

The ETUC and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) urged the Commission **to extend the negotiation period of the Economic Partnership Agreements (EPAs)** with the 77 countries of Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific (ACP) beyond the end of December 2007.

As it is, many ACP countries are being required to negotiate simultaneously a regional customs union, a bilateral deal with the EU and a multilateral negotiations process through the World Trade Organisation (WTO). *"Very few countries in the world would be able to successfully take up such a challenge in five years, and the poorest countries are certainly not in a position to do so,"* said John Monks.

**These decisions need both consensus and a full understanding of their implications in order to ensure that EPAs do not undermine ACP economic and social development.** The ETUC and the ITUC called upon the Commission to take the problem into account and to take all possible steps **to obtain an extension of the negotiation period at the WTO.**



[Joint ETUC and ITUC press release](#)

## EU Agenda

### September - October 2007

03-06/09/2007	European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)	<a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a>
07-08/09/2007	Informal meeting of Foreign Affairs Ministers (Viana do Castelo)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
13-14/09/2007	Conference 'Flexicurity: Key Challenges' (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Conference Agenda</a>
14/09/2007	Eurogroup (Porto)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
15/09/2007	Informal ECOFIN Council (Porto)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
15/09/2007	ECOFIN/EUROMED Ministerial Meeting (Porto)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
17-23/09/2007	European Week for Mobility	
17/09/2007	1st Forum on Social Services of General Interest (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Forum Agenda</a>
17/09/2007	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
21/09/2007	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Development (Funchal)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
24-27/09/2007	European Parliament Plenary Session (Strasbourg)	<a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a>
26-27/09/2007	European Economic and Social Committee Plenary Session (Brussels)	
28/09/2007	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
01-02/10/2007	Transports, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
01-02/10/2007	Informal Meeting of Justice and Home Affairs Ministers (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
04/10/2007	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Gender Equality (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
08/10/2007	Eurogroup (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
09/10/2007	ECOFIN Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
10/10/2007	EU/South Africa Troika (Pretoria)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
10-11/10/2007	European Parliament Mini-Plenary Session (Brussels)	<a href="#">Plenary Session Agenda</a>
11/10/2007	EU/ECOWAS Troika (Ouagadougou)	<a href="#">Meeting Agenda</a>
15-16/10/2007	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
18-19/10/2007	Informal Meeting of Heads of State and Government (Lisbon)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>
24/10/2007	European Economic and Social Committee Plenary Session (Brussels)	
26/10/2007	EU/Russia Summit (Mafra)	<a href="#">Summit Agenda</a>
30/10/2007	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	<a href="#">Council Agenda</a>

## You may be interested

### The ETUC on Youtube and Google video

The ETUC film on trade union membership in Europe is also available on [Youtube](#) and [Google video](#). This film, which is part of the trade union membership project, shows four good practice examples (Italy, Sweden, Poland, United Kingdom) At present it is available in English only, and lasts for 17 minutes.

### Trade union membership and flexicurity: two new sections on the ETUC website

Two new sections "**Trade union membership**" and "**flexicurity**" are currently available on the ETUC website [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org) , in order to give prominence to these two subjects, which are important for all European trade unionists.



["Trade union membership" section](#)



["Flexicurity" section](#)

### Renewal of the ETUC Youth Committee

The ETUC Youth Committee elected a new bureau.

**Robert Hansen** from LO-Norway was elected **President of the Committee**.

**Panikos Argyrides** from SEK (Cyprus) and **Erika Bršelová** from KOZ SR (Slovakia) are the new **vice-Presidents**.

**Andreas Köppe** from DGB (Germany), **Tania Matias** from LCGB (Luxembourg) and **Mikel Paños Bartolome** from CCOO (Spain) are bureau members.

### Publications – recent Commission documents

The following reports are now available:

- [Interim economic forecasts](#) (11/09);
- [Third package of legislative proposals on energy internal market](#) (19/09);

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

- Presentation of the 2007 issue of the Progress Report on Education and Training (03/10);

## Interview

### Interview with John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)



**Q:** *In May, in Seville, the ETUC held its 11th Congress. Has the European trade union movement emerged more strongly from this event?*

**John Monks:** I think the Congress ended on a unified note and there was a wide measure of agreement about the questions that need to be tackled in the next four years. Prominent among those was the need to help affiliates to recruit, and reverse the current worrying fall in membership - not everywhere, but in many places.

There was also a lot of agreement on the need for a stronger social Europe, which has been left in a parking lot for the last six years or so, with no real prospect of new measures, and recognition that this is leading to disillusion and disappointment with the European Union. Business Europe is all very well, but without social measures to balance the single market, workers are coming to see Europe more as a threat than an opportunity. This is not properly recognised by governments or EU authorities.

The third issue is the state of the economy and the growing understanding that financial capitalism is now very dominant. Financial interests – often very short term – are exerting more and more power over the economy. How do we improve regulation, strengthen workers' rights, and stop taxation systems favouring this kind of behaviour? I think there's a wide measure of anger over the very high rewards that chief executives are taking out, and also a desire to see more support for serious productive activity.

Fourthly, there was a wish for a stronger Europe: to see the reform treaty through so that Europe is not paralysed, as it has been since the French and Dutch referendums. Congress wanted to get that out of the way, and for Europe to move on in a social direction. These were the highlights for me.

**Q:** *What are the main demands and priorities for the European trade union movement in the coming months?*

**JM:** Most immediately, there is much concern about what the crisis in the cheaper mortgage sector in the USA might do. We have seen the collapse of two German banks and the near collapse of a big British one in recent weeks. What effect this might have on Europe's economic recovery we don't know yet. I would say that's our top concern. Also we need to get the reform treaty, with the Charter of Fundamental Rights being legally binding on Member States, through in October.

A third priority is to get as many signatures as we can for our public services petition to put pressure on the European authorities and Member States to recognise that not everything should be done for money, that the profit motive should not supersede everything in the name of the single market, and that there's an honoured and proper place for a substantial public sector in all Member States. This is an important task in the months ahead.



## Interview

**Q:** *With the launch of the Intergovernmental Conference to draw up the EU reform treaty, the construction of Europe has moved into an important and delicate phase in the efforts to end the deadlock that has been in force since 2005. In the ETUC's view, what are the non-negotiable elements this new treaty must contain?*

**JM:** As far as we're concerned there's only one non-negotiable element: the Charter of Fundamental Rights must be legally binding in all Member States. I deeply regret that the UK government has negotiated what I regard as an opt-out. That has caused a major reaction from British trade unions who are now calling for a referendum in retaliation. However the Charter *is*, we believe, legally binding in 25 or 26 nations. The demand of the Seville Congress - 'no Charter, no treaty' - has had a beneficial effect at least in those countries. That's absolutely non-negotiable for us. There are problems about the precise status of the Charter at present because the text won't be included in the treaty. We are wrestling with lawyers and others to ensure that there is no doubt about its legally enforceable nature.

**Q:** *The recent financial crisis in the USA has highlighted the fragility of an economy dominated by financial markets. What is the ETUC's position on this issue? How can the European institutions intervene to stop similar crises occurring in the future?*

**JM:** We have been concerned for 18 months at least about the degree of speculation in financial markets – the sense that the gamblers were taking over from serious producers of goods and services. This is exemplified by the rise of private equity and hedge funds. Now we have seen the results of this excess of speculation: a situation where the banks don't even know what their liabilities are in many cases – or if they do they keep it very quiet. We have a situation now where all the authorities are telling us that everything is OK, despite some bank collapses and a run on a bank in Britain which I think is virtually unprecedented since the 19th century. We must now take a hold of the whole financial services sector in order to strengthen regulation and protect investors and workers, end tax privileges, and enlarge the obligations on these people to inform, consult and negotiate with trade unions and workers. We need to slow them down and make them much more aware of all the consequences of what they are doing.

## Interview

**Q:** *The EU conference in Lisbon, in September, on the topic of flexicurity has contributed to the debate on the future of the European Social Model and labour law. What are the ETUC's views?*

**JM:** Flexicurity was a term invented in Denmark with a bit of help from the Dutch. As one professor said recently: "It's a very protestant concept": you must work, whether you are old, or have young children, or are disabled. This is arousing suspicion in some parts of Europe – and there isn't a neat dividing line between protestant and Catholic.

Clearly it is right to try and give people a sense of security, and change is inevitable and can be an ally of workers. We could all be working in coal mines if there had not been significant changes. Our worry at the moment is that the Commission is more precise on the flexibility side than the security side. It is more likely to produce recommendations to reduce unfair dismissal protection or attach conditions to unemployment pay or give young workers a temporary contract on a probationary basis than to establish a right to learning, family-friendly working, or checks on employers' hiring and firing with impunity. So we are nervous that the balance is wrong.

These points were made strongly at the Portuguese presidency conference on flexicurity in Lisbon in September. I think we have made some headway in convincing the Portuguese presidency, but maybe not the Commission. We are waiting now for the Commission's next publication and very much hope it will listen to the contributions from the ETUC and a number of Member States.

### Editorial Team

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