

[ETUC newsletter]



Dear readers,



Returning to work after the summer recess was harsh. At the beginning of September, the European Commission sharply downgraded its autumn economic forecasts, while experts, decision-makers and the press increasingly talked about a global recession.

However, above all, it was the insolvency of Lehmann Brothers, the fourth biggest investment bank in the United States, along with the nationalisation of some American banks, turmoil in Europe and the resulting collapse of global stock exchanges, which almost brought about an economic meltdown – a shock to us all.

Clearly, Europe is facing an economic and financial tsunami to an extent which is not yet determined. The damage can be huge, particularly in social terms. It is quite obvious that the use of public monies to save banks from insolvency will sooner or later have repercussions on taxpayers – and it will be those with more modest incomes who will feel the pinch.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has long been warning against the dangers of 'casino capitalism' and stressing the need for putting regulation in place to prevent financial markets getting out of control. In this regard, it is almost ironic to hear economic policymakers, who supported the '*laissez-faire, laissez passer*' approach for so long, now emphasising the need for financial market regulation!

By the same token, how can it be acceptable for employers to remain deaf to workers' claims for sharing the benefits of growth when, as soon as a problem arises, they demand the intervention of public authorities to manage the losses?

The European trade union movement will not allow workers to be the scapegoats of this situation. Moreover, within the framework of the ETUC summer school in London on 26–27 September, European trade union leaders adopted a Declaration on the crisis of the financial capitalism.

Two other issues also figure high on the agenda: the Working Time Directive and the European Works Council (EWC) Directive are moving into an important decision-making phase.

Following the agreement reached in the Council, the text on working time will soon be discussed in the European Parliament. ETUC will thus organise a campaign to create pressure for changes to the content of a text we cannot accept.

Regarding the revision of the EWC Directive, we have adopted a joint opinion with the employers urging the European Parliament and the Council to take our joint amendments into account during the adoption process.

John Monks
General Secretary



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Figure of the month

5,500£
(About 4,400€)

The bill for each UK taxpayer for the bank rescues in the UK is around £5,500 (about 4,400€) and rising.

Make a note



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[ETUC in action]

The London Declaration

Meeting in London on 26 and 27 September for the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) summer school, Europe's trade union leaders adopted a joint declaration on the crisis of financial capitalism.



The London Declaration: a call for fairness and tough action

Statement by the European Trade Union Confederation on the crisis of casino capitalism

The world financial crisis must be a turning point and cause a complete change in the way the financial world works. The dominant model of financial capitalism is close to collapse. This capitalism, liberated from long-standing restraints around 25 years ago, especially in the USA, has been

used since as a role model for the rest of the world to follow. It has patronised the many while it exploited them for the benefit of the few, following years of exalting privatisation, deregulation and unfettered markets. Now its excesses have brought it close to ruin – and

it threatens the real economy. Indeed, Europe's economy lives in fear of being hit by a financial tsunami speeding across the Atlantic despite the relative strength so far of the euro area. The US Government is scrambling together hundreds of billions of dollars to save key banks from their



[ETUC in action]

The London Declaration

own folly; the credit crunch is strangling finance for industry as banks hoard money to protect themselves. Recession looms.

Let us be absolutely clear. This crisis was caused by greed and recklessness in Wall Street, London and other major financial centres. Senior executives permitted speculation on a huge scale on investments they ill understood. Speculators have exacerbated the serious rises in fuel, food and raw materials. The losers are many and include workers in the industry and more generally, pensioners, families, providers and firms seeking investment capital, and all of us as taxpayers bailing out banks. The costs of the American rescue are huge and the commitment of central banks round the world has already been very substantial. It will take years to recover the money, if ever we manage to do so, and our future ability to fund high-quality public services is being placed in jeopardy.

That's why this time there must be a turning point. Never again can irresponsibility by banks and hedge funds and the rest be allowed to come close to bankrupting nations. Never again must taxpayers' money be used to prop up institutions that continue to

pay huge salaries and bonuses to their top executives. Never again can shareholder value, with directors' bonuses linked to it, be allowed to be the sole goal of companies. We cannot risk a repeat of this gross irresponsibility, greed and negligence.

ETUC is working with the International Trade Union Confederation, UNI-Europa representing finance industry workers and others on a trade union response to this crisis, but it is already clear to us that there need to be:

- injections of public money into financial institutions that carry with them public influence and control so causing a fundamental change in behaviour;
- much tighter control of financial institutions' ability to leverage their operations, by strengthening the ratios of solid assets to liabilities;
- an international, certainly European, level of effective regulation. This is necessitated by the scale of global financial capitalism which now transcends most individual nations. A European Ratings Agency is necessary;
- government action to ensure that funds are available for investment in the real economy, helping develop green jobs and technologies and sustainable development;

- help provided for workers affected, for householders threatened by eviction, for pensioners threatened with poverty in old age, for entrepreneurs seeking investment capital. It is not fair that the main beneficiaries might be those who caused the mess;
- a European-level response to the slowdown that is unfolding in the real economy to prevent the financial turmoil intensifying further as well as to avoid a return to the 'beggar-my-neighbour' approach of competitive wage moderation and reductions in social protection which harm workers and their families;
- urgent return of public policy attention to the major issues of income and wage inequalities. It is inequality and poor wage income for ordinary workers that are driving households into ever more debt through risky financial market techniques.

ETUC therefore calls on Europe to fight for workers' rights, for fair and decent wages, for stable jobs and for strong collective bargaining practice, independent of and not subordinated to law courts and judges.

London
27 September 2008



[ETUC in action]

7 october 2008 – World Day for Decent Work



The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) will organise the [World Day for Decent Work \(WDDW\)](#) on 7 October 2008. The WDDW will focus on the urgent need for a new globalisation. Rights at work, solidarity, and ending poverty and inequality will be the three main themes of the event.

In the framework of this international mobilisation, [the French trade unions affiliated to ETUC – CFDT, FO, CGT, CFTC and UNSA](#) – will co-organise a meeting and concert at the Trocadéro in Paris, with the participation of John Monks and Guy Ryder, ETUC and

ITUC General Secretaries. The Belgian ETUC member trade unions will also organise some activities in cooperation with [Solidar](#) in Brussels – both ETUC and ITUC will be involved in these activities.

The main European trade union movement's demands are notably the respect and application of the fundamental social rights as adopted by the International Labour Organization (ILO) in 1998, as well as sustainable jobs, matched with decent salaries and working conditions that are respectful of health and human dignity.

For more information, please contact Antonio Moreira: amoreira@etuc.org. [ITUC website dedicated to the World Day for Decent Work](#)

Conference on global trade and human rights

29–30/09/2008 – ETUC organised in Brussels a conference on '[Routes towards respecting human rights at work within the framework of the World Trade Organization \(WTO\) agreements](#)'. Participants from trade unions, European and international organisations, as well as from civil society and academics examined the possibilities to change the rules of global governance, in order to ensure the respect of human rights at work within the framework of the WTO agreements.



[Trade Union Agenda] September – October

08–11/09/2008	TUC Congress (United Kingdom)	Congress programme
17/09/2008	Meeting of the Group II "Workers" of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
15/10/2008	ETUC steering committee (Bruxelles)	
15–16/10/2008	ETUC steering committee (Bruxelles)	
21/10/2008	Meeting of the Group II "Workers" of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
28–31/10/2008	French Confederation of Christian Workers (CFTC) Congress (France)	



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

Trade union memorandum submitted to EU French Presidency



01/09/2008 – A delegation led by ETUC President Wanja Lundby-Wedin and General Secretary John Monks, including the general secretaries of the French trade unions affiliated to ETUC, **submitted a [memorandum to the EU French Presidency](#)**. The memorandum outlines **the main demands of the European trade union movement**. For ETUC, social Europe must stay at the heart of the EU's priorities. **The French Presidency must thus put forward solutions to curb the economic and social decline.**

[ETUC press release](#)

[EU French Presidency press release](#)

European works councils: social partners adopt joint advice

02/09/2008 – ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEP) and the European Association of Craft, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (UEAPME) adopted a **joint advice concerning the revision of the European Works Council Directive**. The European social partners called on the European Parliament and the Council of Ministers to take their joint amendments into consideration in the adoption process.

[Joint press release](#)

[Joint letter](#)

ECOFIN Council: investment approach needed to tackle economic slowdown

11/09/2008 – On the eve of the [informal ECOFIN meeting in Nice](#) and **in a context of a serious economic downturn**, ETUC called on European leaders to set up a smart European growth strategy based on an investment approach. According to ETUC Deputy General Secretary, Reiner Hoffmann, *'it would be a tragic mistake to react to the downturn by continuing with a 'wait and see' attitude; on the contrary, Europe should switch to growth and job-friendly demand-side policies'*.

[ETUC press release](#)

[ETUC resolution 'Time to act together!'](#)



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

EU Parliament Industry Committee postpones CO₂ car emission standards

05/09/2008 – On 1 September, the European Parliament Industry Committee postponed for three years the introduction of CO₂ emission standards established by the European Commission. ETUC regrets the outcome of this vote as it weakens the proposals aimed at forcing vehicle manufacturers to reduce CO₂ emissions from new passenger cars. According to ETUC Confederal Secretary Joël Decaillon, ‘it is urgent for the

Commission and Member States to cooperate with the unions, industry and researchers to develop the new technologies and qualifications that will enable us to cope with both the challenge of climate change and depletion of natural resources, and increasing global competition’.

[ETUC press release](#)

[ETUC position adopted on 4 March 2008](#)



[EU Agenda]

September – October 2008

01/09/2008	Extraordinary European Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
01-04/09/2008	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	
05-06/09/2008	Informal Foreign Ministers’ Meeting (Avignon)	Meeting Agenda
09/09/2008	EU-Ukraine summit (Paris)	Summit Agenda
12/09/2008	Eurogroup Meeting (Nice)	Meeting Agenda
12-13/09/2008	Informal meeting of the economy and finance ministers (Nice)	Meeting Agenda
15-16/09/2008	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
17-18/09/2008	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	



[EU Agenda]

September – October 2008 (suite)

22-25/09/2008	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary Session Agenda
25-26/09/2008	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
25-26/09/2008	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
29/09/2008	EU-India Summit (Marseille)	Summit Agenda
29-30/09/2008	Informal Meeting of Development Ministers (Bordeaux)	Meeting Agenda
02-03/10/2008	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
06/10/2008	Eurogroup Meeting (Luxembourg)	Meeting Agenda
07/10/2008	Euro-Med ECOFIN Ministerial meeting (Luxembourg)	Meeting Agenda
08-09/10/2008	“Mini-Plenary” Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	
09-10/10/2008	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
13-14/10/2008	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
15-16/10/2008	European Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
16/10/2008	Ministerial meeting on poverty and social exclusion (Marseille)	Meeting Agenda
17/10/2008	EU – Canada Summit (Montreal)	Summit Agenda
20-23/10/2008	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
20-21/10/2008	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
21-23/10/2008	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
24/10/2008	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
25/10/2008	EU – South Korea Summit (Seoul)	Summit Agenda



[OBITUARIES]

Professor Brian Bercusson

Professor Brian Bercusson – a leading European labour law academic expert and close colleague



It has been with the deepest sadness that the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) learnt of the death at the age of 60 of Professor Brian Bercusson. Brian Bercusson passed away suddenly but peacefully on 17 August at his home in Tuscany.

Brian Bercusson was born in 1947 in Montreal (Canada). He came to the UK to study law at the London School of Economics in 1967. He obtained his PhD from the University of Cambridge and was appointed as a Research Fellow at Christ's College in 1974.

Brian's distinguished career also included an appointment as a Jean Monnet Fellow at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence and a professorship in the Department of Law at the EUI. He also was Chair in European Law at the University of Manchester and then Chair in European Social

and Labour Law at King's College London.

He also worked as a guest professor with the Swedish National Institute for Working Life (Arbetslivsinstitutet) in Stockholm. Stanford Law School and l'Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris. He was also a consultant to Thompsons Solicitors in London.

Brian's death is a tremendous loss for the ETUC. He worked closely with the European trade unions for many years. In 1996, with European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) support, and together with other leading European labour law experts, he wrote A Manifesto for Social Europe with a view to the Amsterdam Treaty reforms which in time triggered the establishment of the ETUI Transnational Trade Union Rights Group, which Brian enthusiastically coordinated until today. The work

of this Group of eminent European labour law academics has positively influenced EU institutional, constitutional and other legal debates for a better Social Europe. The Group's work has included the report, a *Legal Framework for a European Industrial Relations System* (1999), the book *European labour law and the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights* (2006) and more recently, the *Manifesto for a Social Constitution – eight options for the European Union* (2007).

Despite the several setbacks that Europe and, in particular, Social Europe has witnessed in recent years, Brian remained a believer in, and fighter for a strong Social Europe.

A leading European labour law expert, a strong believer in a Social Europe and above all, a warm and charming person. Brian will be sorely missed.



The ETUC pays tribute to its former President, Georges Debunne

Georges Debunne has without a doubt left a lasting impact on several generations of trade unionists.

A prominent figure of Belgian trade unionism, he was equally committed to the European trade union movement. Georges Debunne was one of the founders of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC). He served as its President from April 1982 to May 1985. He was also one of the founding members of the European Federation of Retired and Older People (FERPA) and held the position of President between 1993 and 2001. After 2003, he became honorary President for life of FERPA.

A member of the General Labour Federation

of Belgium (Fédération générale du Travail de Belgique, FGTB), Georges Debunne had a comprehensive and long-term view of the changes needed in Belgium and Europe. A precursor in a number of areas, he launched the concept of «qualitative growth» in the 1970s. He was also in the front ranks of the struggle for the emancipation of women.

Georges Debunne built up solid relations with the academic world and developed a quality research department within the FGTB, before going on to create the Trade Union Institute. The ETUC expresses its condolences to his family and to the FGTB.



[You may be interested]

ETUC 'Netvibes' platform



Following on from [Second Life](#), ETUC continues to expand its use of internet tools for greater interaction and personalisation.

Recently, the ETUC Press and Communication department created its own space on [Netvibes](#), a portal that can be customised to personal needs and enables users to place all their favourite internet sources of information or services on a single page.

Netvibes does not present any of its own content, but simply brings together content and information from other sites and sources.

Since the site's launch in September 2005, more than 50 million pages have been created by its users, in more than 180 countries and 75 languages.

Using the thumbnail page system, the [ETUC Netvibes](#) page presents different modules listing multiple sources of information.

Thanks to the [RSS](#) data flow technology, the different sources of information are automatically updated as soon as new information is available.

The ETUC Netvibes page (www.netvibes.com/ETUC) displays a number of information sources:

- European media: Financial Times, Le Monde, Agence France Presse, Agence Reuters, Euobserver.com and Google news;
- European institutions: Council, Commission and European Central Bank (unfortunately the European Parliament does not yet have an RSS data feed);
- the latest ETUC press releases and pictures.

To interact with other users, particularly our members, we have included a 'comment' section where messages can be left. Users simply have to register for free with Netvibes.

A calendar and a weather thumbnail have also been added to the page.

The tool offers further room for development, such that a number of new thumbnails and links can be added in the future to satisfy our needs and respond to users' suggestions.

For more information:

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Useful links:

- ETUC Netvibes page:
<http://www.netvibes.com/ETUC>
- More information on Netvibes:
<http://about.netvibes.com/>

Publications

European Commission publications

The following report is now available:

[EU interim forecasts](#)

(10/09)

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