

[ETUC newsletter]



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Figure of the month

10 millions
unemployed
in one month only

More than 10 million Chinese workers have lost their job in March. Since the beginning of the crisis, China has recorded more than 30 million unemployed. (Source: El Pais)

FIGHT THE CRISIS
PUT PEOPLE FIRST



Dear Readers,

May promises to be a busy month for the European trade union movement. First of all, this year's May Day activities took place in a very particular context of distress and social tension due to the many social repercussions of the crisis. Then we will have a European Jobs Summit, although unfortunately it will be very watered down compared with what was initially planned.

The key event will, without a doubt, be the four Euro-demonstrations that we are organising in the context of the European Action Days, from 14 to 16 May. Trade unions throughout Europe are busy preparing these demonstrations, which will take place in Madrid, Brussels, Prague and Berlin. On these action days, European trade unions will march to save jobs and say 'no' to a crisis they did not cause but for which they are paying the highest price.

But our mobilisation does not stop there. On 27 and 28 May, all the leaders of ETUC member organisations will meet in Paris to continue the debate on the economic and social crisis and the actions needed to resolve it.

All these events are accentuated by the fact that they are taking place in the final run-up to the European elections, an event of key importance for the future of Europe and its workers. We call for a vote in favour of a social Europe worthy of the name and will launch a campaign to that effect on Europe Day, 9 May. We have compiled all our demands in a manifesto that we will present to the candidates standing in the European elections, asking them to make a commitment to build a Europe that places people's rights at the heart of its priorities. Our support will come at that price.

I hope to see a great many of you in Madrid, Brussels, Prague and Berlin.

Together, let's make the voice of social Europe heard!

John Monks
General Secretary



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[ETUC in action]

‘Put people first’: ETUC organises European actions days to say ‘no’ to the crisis

In the framework of its campaign ‘[Fight the crisis: put the people first](#)’, ETUC is organising **four Euro-demonstrations** from 14 to 16 May in **Madrid, Brussels, Prague and Berlin**.

The key message of these European action days is **putting people and workers at the heart of priorities and policies**. In fact, it is unacceptable that workers pay an extremely high price for a crisis they did not cause.

The European trade unions will also demonstrate because they call for a New Social Deal that saves employment, and they ask for adequate recovery plans to face such a severe crisis.

CALENDAR OF THE ACTION DAYS AND PRACTICAL INFORMATION:

- **14 May 2009** : Madrid – [Route of demonstration](#) (855Kb PDF)
- **15 May 2009** : Brussels – [Route of demonstration](#) (651Kb PDF)
- **16 May 2009** : Berlin – [Route of demonstration](#) (865Kb PDF)
- **16 May 2009** : Prague – [Route of demonstration](#) (804Kb PDF)

USEFUL LINKS:

- Euro-demonstrations 14–16 May 2009: [Practical information](#)
- ETUC Declaration for the European campaign [Fight the crisis: put the people first](#)
- For background information highlighting ETUC’s actions and positions in relation to the social and economic crisis, please refer to the [dossier on the subject](#).

City	Date	Time
MADRID	14/05/09	12:30
BRUSSELS	15/05/09	12:30
BERLIN	16/05/09	12:30
PRAGUE	16/05/09	12:30

European Trade Union confederation (ETUC)
www.etuc.org
Support the ETUC's European Days of Action



[ETUC in action]

South East Europe Trade Union Forum discuss policy to confront the crisis

07-08/04/2009 - On the occasion of a meeting in Zagreb (Croatia), the members of the South Eastern Europe Trade Union Forum discussed the **impact of the crisis on the region**, as well as its future. John Monks, General Secretary of both ETUC and the Pan European Regional Council (PERC) of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), presented the participants with the European trade union movement's demands and asked them to **support the European action days on 14-16 May**.

[ETUC press release](#)

A victory for the unions: 1 May is made a public holiday in Turkey

27/04/2009 - ETUC welcomes the decision by the Turkish government to recognise the celebration of Labour Day on 1 May as a public holiday. It is a great achievement for the trade union movement who mobilised widely for that.

[ETUC press release](#)

ETUC steering committee

28/04/2009 - The ETUC steering committee met in Brussels. The response to the crisis, the European action days on 14-16 May and the campaign for the European elections were the main topics of the meeting. Some representatives from the main European political parties took part in a session to address the ETUC Manifesto for the European Parliament elections and respond to question from the floor.

[Trade Union Agenda]

April - May 2009

01-04/04/2009	UGT Congress (Spain)	
28/04/2009	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
01/05/2009	International Labour Day	
11-16/05/2009	LO-N Congress (Oslo)	Congress Agenda
13/05/2009	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
14/05/2009	European Action Day (Madrid)	
15/05/2009	European Action Day (Brussels)	
16/05/2009	European Action Day (Berlin and Prague)	
20-23/05/2009	CISL Congress (Italy)	Congress Agenda
27-28/05/2009	ETUC mid-term conference (Paris)	



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

Working time: the failure of the conciliation does not mean ETUC will give up its fight for adequate minimum standards

28/04/2009 – After the failure to reach an agreement in the conciliation process* between the European Parliament and the Council on the revision of the Working Time Directive, ETUC will continue to fight for adequate minimum standards on working time in Europe. Following the failure of the negotiations, John Monks declared: *'We agree with the European Parliament that, unfortunately, an agreement was not possible. A group of countries has become so much addicted to the individual opt-out that, by now, they consider it as their fundamental right to keep it forever. This is unacceptable.'*

* The conciliation committee, composed equally of members of the Council of the European Union and of the Parliament, convenes in the 6 weeks following the failure of a second reading. Its aim is to find a compromise. If a compromise is reached, the Parliament and the Council will vote on the compromise proposal, without any possibility to present new amendments. In this case, the legal text is approved. If no compromise is found, the act is considered as non adopted and the procedure is closed.

[ETUC press release](#)

[European Parliament press release](#)

[EU Czech Presidency press release](#)

Revised European Works Councils Directive is adopted

27/04/2009 – **ETUC welcomed the decision by the Council to adopt the revised European Works Councils (EWC) Directive.** For Reiner Hoffmann, ETUC Deputy General Secretary, *'enabling EWCs to fully play their role in these times of crisis marked by rising redundancies is the correct response. In particular ETUC welcomed the improved definition of information and consultation rights in a transnational context.'*

[ETUC press release](#)

Cross-border healthcare: significant improvement

01/04/2009 – The European Parliament's Committee on Environment, Public Health and Food Safety found an agreement on the **proposal for a directive on the application of patients' rights in cross-border healthcare.** Even if this vote improves the initial proposal, **ETUC asks the European Parliament to further enhance it**, notably concerning the question of prior authorisation and the inclusion of the social dimension, by completing the legal bases of this proposal for a directive.

[ETUC press release](#)



[EU Agenda]

April – May 2009

01-02/04/2009	Mini-plenary Session at the European Parliament (Brussels)	
02/04/2009	G-20 Summit (London)	
03-04/04/2009	Informal ECOFIN Meeting (Prague)	Meeting Agenda
05/04/2009	USA-EU Summit (Prague)	Summit Agenda
06-07/04/2009	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
14-15/04/2009	Informal Meeting of Ministers for the Environment (Prague)	Meeting Agenda
21-24/04/2009	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
27-28/04/2009	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
03-05/05/2009	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Competitiveness (Prague)	Meeting Agenda
04/05/2009	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
04-07/05/2009	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
05/05/2009	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
07/05/2009	Employment Summit (Prague)	Summit Agenda
07/05/2009	Eastern Partnership Summit (Prague)	Summit Agenda
11-12/05/2009	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
13-14/05/2009	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
18-19/05/2009	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
28-29/05/2009	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda



[Dossier]

EUROPEAN ELECTIONS 2009: the European Parliament can make the difference

Getting an audience for the voice of social Europe

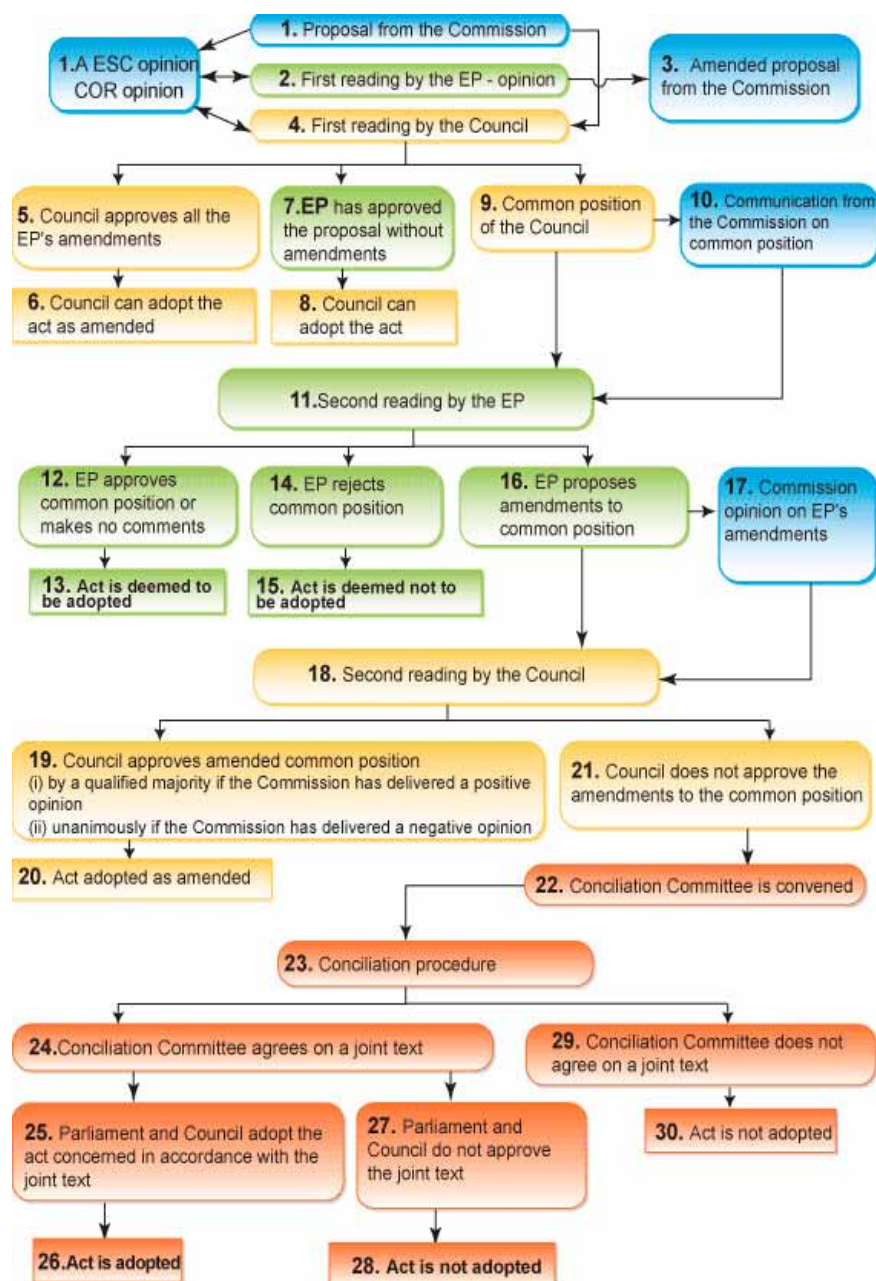
Between 4 and 7 June next, 500 million citizens in the 27 Member States of the European Union (EU) will be invited to **vote to renew the members of the European Parliament**, for a five-year term of office.

Since 1979, when the first elections by universal direct suffrage were held, the size of the European Parliament has increased significantly in line with the successive enlargements to the EU. It now stands at **736 Members of Parliament (MEPs)** – this number will rise to 751 MEPs once the Lisbon Treaty is ratified by all EU Member States. Another noteworthy fact is that the powers of the European Parliament have been expanded to the point where it has now become a crucial European political player, with considerable influence in defending the interests of Europe's citizens. This article explores some instances that illustrate the importance of the European Parliament in the daily life of Europe's citizens.

Within the framework of the Community institutional system, **the members of the European Parliament**, grouped into transnational political groups, **represent the voice of the citizens**. They direct the policies of the European Union, at both the legislative and budgetary levels. Due to the increased influence of the European Parliament in the institutional balance of the EU, as well as the political issues currently at stake – such as the economic and social crisis, climate change and social policies – **the June 2009 elections represent a major event for workers and the European trade unions which represent them.**

What are the responsibilities of the European Parliament (under the Nice Treaty)?

As the only European institution to be elected democratically, **the European Parliament exercises three key powers – legislative, budgetary and control.** It has





[Dossier]

Getting an audience for the voice of social Europe (following)

seen its responsibilities constantly increase in the light of reforms and new treaties.

The European Parliament **shares the legislative power with the Council of Ministers** – the European institution representing the Member States – within the framework of the so-called **co-decision** procedure. It exercises its power in ever wider fields, notably **social affairs, the internal market, health and safety, and the environment**.

In contrast with what happens at the national level, **the European Parliament does not have the power to make legislative proposals, for that monopoly rests with the European Commission**. However, the European Parliament can ask the Commission to propose legislative acts.

When it comes to **budgetary questions**, the European Parliament has a fundamental prerogative in the institutional system in terms of the **definition of the budget and the control of spending**. The Parliament shares the budgetary power with the Council of Ministers. They define the spending for the EU for one year, within the limits imposed by the financial perspectives: the European Union's multi-year plan. **The Parliament, however, has the last word when it comes to all non-compulsory spending**, which may account for two thirds of total spending.

Regarding **budgetary control**, the Parliament has the right to control the use of Community funding and, above all, it is **the only EU institution to be able to issue a discharge in respect of the budget**, making it possible to wind up an annual budget year¹.

Moreover, the European Parliament has the **power of political control over the activities undertaken by the Commission**: it approves the nomination of the president of the Commission and auditions each of the European Commissioners, while being entitled to refuse their nomination.²

The European Parliament and the European trade union movement: close ties in the service of the workers

Since the entry into force of the Maastricht Treaty in 1993, **the European Parliament has been an essential**



The trade union intergroup meeting on the eve of the vote on the Services directive

institution in the EU, one which carries increasingly political influence. This is why the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has been developing some very important activity vis-à-vis that institution, with permanent contacts with MEPs, and the organisation and running of a trade union intergroup within the Parliament.

The goal of **the trade union intergroup coordinated by ETUC**, created in 1979, is to give MEPs regular presentations of the European trade union movement's positions on the issues on the agenda of the parliamentary sessions. The trade union intergroup is open to MEPs from the main European political groups (Socialists, Christian Democrats, Greens, the Left and Liberals), and it carries out information activities and maintains a direct contact with MEPs. The trade union intergroup **fosters contacts with a large number of MEPs**.

Let us take an example: on the eve of the vote on the directive on services, the so-called 'Bolkestein' Directive, the trade union intergroup brought together a large number of MEPs to explain to them the underlying reasons for the Euro-demonstration staged by ETUC in this respect, as well as the expectations of European trade unionism. The result was persuasive.

¹ Drawing on this very important power, the European Parliament embarked in 1999 on a procedure which pushed the Commission under Jacques Santer to resign because of the lack of transparency in the use of Community resources.

² In 2004, following backwards-looking comments on homosexuality and the role of women in society, the Italian Rocco Buttiglione was not appointed as a European Commissioner.



[Dossier]

Getting an audience for the voice of social Europe (following)

The Services Directive, REACH and temporary agency workers: three major success stories for the European trade unions, but they were not the only ones...

During the current administration (2004–2009), the trade union movement has **scored several successes with the European Parliament**, notably on key topics such as the Services Directive, the regulation on chemical substances (REACH) and the Directive on temporary agency workers. In fact, in these three cases, under pressure from the European trade unions, the European Parliament has put its political and institutional influence to positive use, pushing the Council to review its copy and to find an upwards compromise.

We are citing three topics here which have led to favourable results, but there are others such as the Directive on port services, European Works Councils and working time, as well as the 'climate change' package. Regarding the **Bolkestein Directive**, the MEPs have **listened to the concerns of Europe's citizens by hammering out a compromise giving concessions to the demands from the trade unions**, which stripped the original text of its ultra-liberal tendencies, namely the 'country of origin' principle.

Likewise, the European Parliament has won its 'political duel' with the Council in the **REACH** case – the regulation regarding the registration, authorisation and evaluation of chemical substances.

The European trade union movement has been very actively mobilised on this issue, keeping a very close eye on the activity of the rapporteur and the competent parliamentary committees. **The agreement achieved responded to many of ETUC's demands.**

The third example of a success for the European Parliament has been the **vote on the directive on temporary workers, introducing the principle of equal treatment for temporary workers as from the first day they are hired**. This was a landmark success for the European trade union movement, which had been arguing since 2002 with the MEPs to get the rights of these workers enshrined and defined in Europe.

ETUC Manifesto for the European elections in June 2009: Why vote? Voting 'right'!

The European trade union movement is well aware of the **importance of the forthcoming European**



ETUC demonstration in Strasbourg on the eve of the vote on the Services directive

elections determining the future construction of Europe and of social Europe in particular. As we have just seen, Parliament can make the difference, by adopting directives and regulations that have an impact on all citizens and workers in the EU.

ETUC invites all workers to vote in the next European elections and to make the most of this opportunity demonstrating that we need a more social and fairer Europe.

Therefore, ETUC has published a **statement of trade union demands** advocating:

- **the reinforcement of both workers' and trade unions' rights**, through the adoption of a **social progress protocol** and a **revision of the Directive on the posting of workers** – all candidates standing on this platform deserve trade union support;
- a **New Social Deal** enabling us to cope with the economic crisis with the full involvement of the trade unions and workers: **full employment, better salaries and pensions, investment in sustainable development**, as well as **strict regulation of the financial markets** are the key elements of such a deal;
- the establishment up of a **social European Union**, with a coordinated fiscal policy;
- **stronger protection against the increasing precariousness of work**, in favour of workers finding themselves in a precarious situation;



Getting an audience for the voice of social Europe (following)

- an **economic growth strategy geared to research and innovation**, to allow the EU to evolve swiftly towards a **low-carbon economy**;
- a fresh initiative on **equal opportunities** to eliminate persistent forms of discrimination, such as the wage gap between women and men;
- **equal treatment for migrant and mobile workers**;
- the **promotion of and respect for public services**.

USEFUL LINKS:

- European Parliament site: www.europarl.europa.eu
- European Parliament campaign on the European elections: 'It's your choice'
- <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/elections2009/default.htm?language=EN>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

- **Wolfgang Kowalsky** – ETUC adviser in charge of relations with the European Parliament: wkowalsk@etuc.org

[Dossier]

The European Social Fund

Following the articles on the operation of the [European Restructuring Monitor \(ERM\)](#) and the contribution made by the [European Globalisation Adjustment Fund](#), we are completing our series of articles in relation to the economic crisis with one on the European Social Fund (ESF). The ESF, which was established in 1957, is one of the structural funds of the European Union (EU)¹.

As a major financial instrument in the EU's cohesion policy since 1999, the ESF supports EU Member States' initiatives to implement the Lisbon Strategy, in particular in terms of growth and employment. In addition, the ESF is a major lever in the European economic recovery plan that was approved by the European Council in December 2008.

What is the mission of the ESF?

As the principal financial instrument in the EU's cohesion policy and the European Employment Strategy, the ESF supports policies and projects designed to achieve full employment, improve the quality and productivity of labour, deliver social inclusion through the promotion of access for disadvantaged persons to employment, as

well as to reduce national, regional and local disparities in terms of employment.

For the period 2007–2013, the ESF is contributing to the funding of priority actions, notably by investing some €76 billion in projects being carried out by the Member States. These actions are aimed at increasing workers' capacity for adjustment in order to improve their ability to anticipate economic changes, improving access to employment and sustainable labour market pathways for jobseekers, preventing and reducing long-term unemployment and youth unemployment, as well as combating all forms of labour market discrimination.

Role of ESF in the structural funds in terms of facing up to the economic crisis

The unprecedented financial crisis we are currently living through has rapidly had an impact on the real economy, closing down many businesses and driving unemployment ever higher.

To tackle the crisis, the EU has adopted a European economic recovery plan with funding worth some €200 billion. One of the cornerstones of this recovery plan relates to the modification of the conditions for the granting and use of the ESF.

¹ The European structural funds are the financial instruments of the European Union's regional policy. Four of these funds exist: the European Social Fund (ESF), the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF), and the European Fisheries Fund (EFF). Their shared mission is to promote the development of the less advanced regions or to help the regions in crisis to reorient themselves in such a way as to bring the standard of living of citizens across the European Union to the same level.



[Dossier]

European Social Fund (following)

Structural funds	Advances in 2009 (in billions of euro)		
	Before the recovery plan	Added to the recovery plan	Total
UE-15	0.00	3.80	3.80
UE-12	2.29	2,29	4.58
Cross-border co-operation	0.08	0.16	0.24
Total	2.37	6.25	8.62
ESF share	0.53	1.76	2.29

Source: European Commission

Without changing its objectives and areas of intervention, the EU has made some sweeping modifications to the structural funds – and to the ESF in particular – in order to support investments in the real economy. These measures cover the use of funds not spent during the previous planning period 2000–2006, the increase of the funding advances to the Member States more flexible cofinancing rules, simplified administrative and accounting procedures, and targeted support for small projects. To achieve a greater impact in the short term, the Commission has decided to grant the investments at the beginning of each project planned by the Member States, thereby increasing prefinancing of initiatives.

One important new feature is worth noting: the greater flexibility allowed in the financing of new projects. It is now possible to ask for financing covering the entirety of a project, reducing the impact on national budgets, while in the past the ESF paid only 85% by way of cofinancing towards the total cost of a project.

ETUC demands

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) sees much that is positive in the Commission's proposal to make the cohesion policy contribute towards the European economic recovery plan. The structural funds, which account for over a third of the EU's budget, can represent a funding stream in the real economy in tack-

ling the challenges arising in the short, medium and long terms. However, ETUC is of the opinion that the ESF investments must not be directed only to the development of human resources and the re-employment of workers who have been made redundant, but that these investments should also – and as a priority – focus on the creation of sustainable growth and jobs, building on the Lisbon priorities, in particular the European Employment Strategy. In light of this, particular attention should be paid to young people. Similarly, Europe's trade unions demand to be involved in the definition and implementation of projects that enjoy support from the ESF.

Moreover, ETUC feels that it is important to look ahead to the period after the crisis and to work on new qualifications which are required for the development of new economic sectors such as renewable energies, for example.

USEFUL LINKS:

- European Commission ESF site: <http://ec.europa.eu/esf>

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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EuroDemo

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