

# TUC Education

## European Review

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Welcome to the eighteenth issue of the new-look *European Review* which will be emailed four times a year as a supplement to those registered to receive TUC Education Update. A hard copy will also be posted to Union Education Officers, TUC course co-ordinators and tutors. Everyone with an interest in European affairs as they affect trade unionists can still access the magazine online at <http://www.tueip.dircon.co.uk/> or at <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/education/index.cfm?mins=88>

### **Bargaining round up**

ROMANIAN DOCKERS RECENTLY ACHIEVED WIDE-RANGING improvements in pay and conditions after an open-ended strike.

Suffering from a hiring system reminiscent of pre-1960s Britain, workers being called in by telephone if and when they are needed, employees and their unions demanded a stable working schedule, a pay rise of 700 Lei per month, increased bonuses, length of service and hazardous working benefits and enhanced annual leave. Their employer, CSCT, in profit to the tune of €12 million in 2007, refused everything except a pay increase of 375 Lei. The National Federation of Port Unions (FNSP), after a warning stoppage, gave notice of the strike. Backed by two national trade union confederations, over 500 dockers struck for twelve days until a deal was reached. The employers conceded a 650 lei pay rise, a minimum company wage, an extra day of leave and a regular work schedule.

WITH WIDESPREAD DISSATISFACTION IN THE CZECH trade union movement at government policy on public sector pay, pension reform and privatisation in the health service, the largest union confederation, ČMKOS, called a 'month of sporadic unrest' culminating in a strike. Most workers withdrew their labour for one hour although many in the healthcare sector struck for a day. Nonetheless train and metro services ground to a halt, schools were closed and hospital operations postponed. So far the government has made no concessions, one minister regarding trade union protests as a natural side-effect of reform.

WHILE CONTINENTAL COUNTRIES GENERALLY LAGGED behind the UK when it came to privatisation of public utilities, by the end of the nineties many nationalised industries had been sold off. In Austria the state-owned post and telecoms concern was first turned into a private company and then split. However the former state employees retained their civil service status which meant that they could not be laid off. As competition and the growth of mobile phone use has led to a decline in its

business, Telekom Austria wants to place over two thousand of these workers into a pool to be hired out to private companies. The post and telecoms union GPF contests the legality of this move but also questions the need for it as, it says, 1,200 temporary agency workers are currently employed. The union suggests renationalising the landline section of the company and has held workplace meetings to both inform its members and seek a mandate for industrial action. They will have to address their demands to a new government after the general election in Austria.

### **Full speed ahead for ILO maritime convention as social partners sign EU deal**

AFTER TWO YEARS OF NEGOTIATION THE SOCIAL PARTNERS IN the shipping industry have come to an agreement that will form the basis for an EU directive on labour standards. Unions and employers in a particular sector can follow this route to a new law just as the European Trade Union Federation and Business Europe have made deals on subjects, such as part-time workers, which apply across different industries. The concord follows the Maritime Labour Convention adopted by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) in 2006. It aims to provide protection for seafarers where they are excluded from EU legislation on training, health and safety, annual leave, working time and rest periods. It also covers accommodation, recreational activities, food and catering, medical care, and welfare and sets a minimum age for 'any person who is employed or engaged or works in any capacity on board a ship'. It is hoped to improve the working lives of over 300,000 employees in the maritime sector across Europe. Although some parts of the industry have been in decline, growth in areas such as wind energy, recreational boating and cruise tourism will help it to expand by an estimated 3% to 4%

over the next decade. Counting all sea-related sectors, about five million workers are believed to depend on it.



Commissioners Špidla and Tajani celebrate the signing of the deal

Once the proposed directive has been passed by the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament, the European Transport Workers' Federation (ETF) and the European Community Shipowners' Associations (ECSA) hope that the ILO convention will be swiftly ratified by the 27 EU Member States which account for about 28% of world shipping tonnage. When 30 countries representing over a third of world tonnage are on board both labour charters will come into force. They also believe that the directive will make it easier to interpret the convention uniformly across the EU and allow redress from the European Court of Justice if it is infringed.

Speaking at a celebration at the port of Brussels EU Employment Commissioner Vladimír Špidla said that the agreement would 'contribute significantly to ensuring decent work, the fight against social dumping and the establishment of identical rules' while Transport Commissioner Antonio Tajani promised that 'the European Union will contribute to protect seafarers from unfair competition'. The directive forms part of the Commission's renewed 'social agenda' and

will be followed up later this year by a communication on the future of maritime transport in general entitled 'Maritime transport: Blue horizons of commitment'.

The text of the agreement is available on the web at :

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/dsw/public/displayRecord.do?id=5082](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/dsw/public/displayRecord.do?id=5082)

### **Pay rise wanted by European workers, not more 'restraint'**

NOW THAT THE LAST COUPLE OF YEARS OF ECONOMIC EXPANSION in the EU appear to be coming to a halt, workers in various European countries seem to agree that the proceeds were not shared fairly with them. Faced with rising prices, particularly for food and fuel, trade unions are ditching long-held policies of pay restraint and demanding catch-up rises. As ever, the position in the EU's largest economy, Germany, is a good indicator. After recent years of moderating pay demands and even accepting longer working hours, both to stop German jobs relocating to the cheaper countries in the East and under pressure from the government's 'Agenda 2010' initiative, trade unions want workers to cash in on the economic improvement that resulted. Influential metalworkers' union IG Metall is to lodge a pay claim of between 7% and 8%, the highest for sixteen years. While factory profits rose by 220% between 2004 and 2007 employees have gained little according to union official Berthold Huber who called recent progress in the economy a 'lop-sided upswing'.

There are signals that unions throughout Europe want to do something about this. Just as governments, and some economists, call for EU citizens not to seek compensation in salaries for increasing food and fuel prices for fear of stoking inflation, workers in the UK look

set to protest against a public sector pay limit and eastern Europeans are becoming more willing to take action to maintain their recent increase in wages. As well as the 8% rise demand in the Czech Republic (see page 2) the Polish Solidarity union has been holding well-attended marches where near-empty shopping trolleys are displayed as symbols of impoverishment and Latvian health care workers are set to strike for several days in protest against a public sector pay freeze to start next year. Recent rumblings in the education sector in Luxembourg were eventually settled without a threatened strike, the deal including a greater than 10% pay rise for primary school teachers while Lithuanian higher education employees secured a 20% annual increase for the next three years.

It remains to be seen if higher wages will bring about further inflation or, as some experts maintain, balance the economic downturn with increased spending by consumers. 'Domestic demand can ease the effects of an economic slowing and make a stabilising contribution during the slowdown phase' in the words of Claus Schaefer, an economist with the German research institute WSI.

### **Germany goes for piecemeal introduction of minimum wage**

THE GERMAN PARLIAMENT HAS DECIDED TO USE THE EU POSTED WORKERS DIRECTIVE and a little-used Minimum Conditions of Work law to gradually bring in a minimum wage across the economy. Germany is one of the few EU member states that does not have a statutory minimum wage. Under its post-war industrial relations model each workplace was covered by one trade union and pay agreements were made across entire industries rather than company by company. In this way all employees were guaranteed a freely negotiated rate which was expected to be set

at a decent level. However in recent years this system has begun to unravel for a number of reasons. Many companies in the former East Germany are not members of the employers' associations that sign the deals with unions and so don't feel bound by the rates agreed; because the mainstream confederation, DGB, has followed a policy of pay restraint in recent years new, independent unions have sprung up in specific sectors promising better salaries; mergers have blurred occupational boundaries between trade unions and a rival Christian confederation has concluded lower pay rate agreements than the DGB in some firms. As a consequence of these developments a quarter of workers in the former West Germany are now neither covered by any industry-wide agreement nor have anyone representing them in the workplace. Allied to a huge growth in unemployment since the eighties, the result has been the establishment of a low-wage economy alongside the unionised one.

Under the SPD government, which ruled the country before 2005, discussion began on the possible introduction of a statutory minimum wage. Opinion was found to be divided inside both main political parties and between trade unions. Whilst some wanted 'to draw a line under wages' many union chiefs were against the whole idea as a weakening of collective bargaining or sought a return to the old system by extending deals to all firms in a sector, whether or not they were unionised. The largest trade union ver.di, however, was in favour. Now it seems that a solution has been reached in a roundabout way. Concerned about low wages in the commercial cleaning industry, unions negotiated national minimum rates but were powerless to enforce them on rogue employers. Brought in to ensure EU migrant workers had the same basic conditions as those of their host country, the

Posted Workers directive allows such agreements to be declared generally binding by the government. By extending its scope to the cleaning sector in 2007, parliament began a process which has since spread to postal workers and this summer another eight industries, such as temporary agency work, care homes, security, waste disposal and forestry, representing 1.5 million employees, asked to have their pay deals included. The legislation will only apply where 50% of employees in an industry are covered by a collective agreement so the Minimum Conditions of Work law, passed in 1952, will be invoked in cases where there are 'serious social concerns' about low pay in a sector where coverage falls below this limit. It is thought that applications from industries like meat processing, small bakeries, call centres and hairdressers are likely to be submitted asking the tripartite committee to set a minimum rate.

It appears that the use of this legislation will provide a compromise avoiding the introduction of a national minimum wage in Germany but there are still likely to be complications, for instance if there are competing rates agreed by different unions in the same industry. Also there exist sectors where there is no 'employer side' to negotiate with and the ability to delay decisions by legal challenge are built in to the procedures.

THIS ITEM IS BASED ON INFORMATION FROM  
*EUROPEAN EMPLOYMENT REVIEW*

### **Špidla hints at improved maternity leave**

THE EU EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES COMMISSIONER Vladimír Špidla has floated the idea of extending the minimum length of maternity leave and insisting on full pay for new mothers during that time. While laws vary from country to country the EU lays down a fourteen week

period at the moment, although the amount of benefit paid is left to Member States. In the UK mothers receive 90% of salary for six weeks and are then entitled to Statutory Maternity Pay, usually much lower, for another 33 weeks. Mr. Špidla proposes, in a draft Commission paper, to increase compulsory leave to eighteen weeks on full pay, to grant additional leave in the case of premature childbirth, child hospitalised at birth, babies with disabilities and multiple births, and to make it difficult for employers to dismiss returning mothers for the first year after maternity leave. The proposal argues that 'This increase allows women to recover from pregnancy and childbirth, to have more time with their children, and to be able to breastfeed for a longer period'. Commenting on the cost of the new provisions Commissioner Špidla highlighted the need to encourage a higher birth rate in future years 'This would certainly cost more money. But one cannot face demographic ageing without paying anything'.



Mother, baby & computer, the EU wants to help all three

### **Globalisation fund grossly underspent in first year**

THE EU EUROPEAN GLOBALISATION ADJUSTMENT FUND, which was designed to help workers made redundant by job relocation or other effects of the unlimited worldwide reach of companies in today's economy, has been severely underused in its first year of operation. The maximum annual amount allocated by EU leaders to the fund at the Hampton Court Summit in 2005 was €500 million. Although this was not a target, the total of only €18.6 million granted during 2007 suggests that the mechanism is hardly working at full capacity. British trade unions believe that this is partly due to a lack of publicity about the fund, particularly in the UK, as well as the complicated process to be gone through in applying for the money. The TUC agrees with some suggestions put forward by the EU Commission to improve the working of the fund. These include exchanging good practice in making applications, extending its remit to cover cases where a firm's production unit moves abroad while head office remains in the UK, 'mobility allowances' for workers seeking a new job in another Member State and acting before a four month period has elapsed as presently stipulated.

It is hoped that such reforms will increase the take-up of the fund; only ten applications were received in 2007. Recently the Commission approved a plan by Italy to help 6,000 workers, employed by many small companies, who lost their jobs in the textile industry due to restructuring. This approval highlights the way in which small enterprises may band together to ask their government to come up with a plan if over 1,000 redundancies are involved, 50% of the cost of which can be contributed by the fund. The grant of over €35

million has now to be agreed by the parliament and the Council of Ministers.

### **Temps deal to help Irish unions as new partnership fails**

FOR THE FIRST TIME IN TWENTY YEARS government, unions and employers in Ireland have failed to reach agreement on a social partnership deal. Following the 2006-2008 agreement 'Towards 2016', the seventh since the ground-breaking 'Programme for National Recovery' in 1987, the three parties hoped to conclude a new framework. However the economic downturn and inflation in Ireland plus disagreements on temporary agency workers (TAW) led to a collapse of the talks. The recent green light for an EU TAW directive strengthened the union hand in negotiations as it will specify equal treatment with permanent employees from day one of temporary employment but will allow Member States to agree exceptions (derogations) as part of collective bargaining. This is what has happened in the UK. With this new law safely in their back pocket the trade unions (ICTU) hoped to wring concessions from employers on other issues by holding out the possibility of a UK-style watering down of the directive. Employers' representatives (IBEC) were not prepared to bargain in this way and insisted that any deal on agency workers must stand alone.

With social partnership at an end it is expected that the coming winter will be a fractious one for industrial relations. Bank and insurance company workers as well as nurses are likely to submit pay claims soon. 'The whole social partnership system will begin to fray at the edges now', said a SIPTU union official, 'We'll see a series of danger points. The government won't be able to say to the nurses now that "you are breaching national pay deals"'.

### Unions want Iceland to join EU – and fast

ICELAND COULD BE A SURPRISE NEW EU entrant and trade unions could be behind the move according to reports as the *European Review* went to press. Seemingly in a worse position than any other country caught up in the world banking collapse, the country's unions have come under pressure to repatriate their pension funds now used to invest abroad. Iceland's banks hugely expanded during the boom and bought up household names such as West Ham United football club, the Somerfield supermarket chain, and Hamleys toy shops. But as boom turned to bust the government nationalised the third biggest financial institution and Prime Minister Geir Haarde, called for the others to sell off their foreign assets. However, with the local currency, the krona, in freefall and the annual rate of inflation at 14% the unions do not want to devalue workers' pensions. They suggested that Iceland join the Euro as a way of stabilising the economy but EU Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn told a delegation of government, unions and employers that this was impossible without joining the Community itself.



The capital, Reykjavik: bank collapse could lead to EU status

Trade unions, therefore, are pressing for full membership. Perhaps surprisingly the Commissioner said that this could be completed within a year as Iceland has been in the European Economic Area, which allows it to trade in the European Single Market, since 1994.

### Age Concern suffers blow to compulsory retirement case but fight goes on

The Equal Treatment in Employment directive, passed by the EU in 2000, outlawed discrimination at the workplace. When, in 2006, the subsequent UK law implementing this allowed compulsory retirement at 65 the group Age Concern objected that the directive had not been followed. We catch up with the latest round of their campaign.

According to a spokesperson for Age Concern 'More than a million people are already working past state pension age and they are the fastest growing group in the workforce'. The EU Commission, wary of the 'demographic time bomb' that will see an increasingly ageing population in Europe as the century progresses, wants to encourage people to continue working as they get older. However the British government seems to have taken a different view when it inserted a provision into UK law which allowed employers to compel workers to retire when they reached 65. Although employees can make requests to continue past this point it remains the 'default age' and as long as companies consider these and give appropriate notice there is no comeback.

This appeared to conflict with the original aims of the directive and so a case was brought against the UK government at the European Court of Justice. However the Advocate General of the court, who gives an opinion before the final judgment has found the British laws to be compatible with the EU legislation.

He said that differences in treatment between people on grounds of age could be lawful 'if that rule is objectively and reasonably justified in the context of national law by a legitimate aim relating to employment policy'. Despite the earlier case of *Palacios de la Villa* (see issue 41) in which compulsory retirement was justified on specific grounds, he also maintained that national laws do not have to specify exactly which differences are allowed even though the original directive gives examples of 'allowed discrimination'.

The final ruling is expected sometime before Christmas and, at present there are 260 cases at employment tribunals in the UK waiting on the outcome. According to Age Concern the current law is 'costing good workers their jobs' in 'Denying people work because of their date of birth'.

### **Recent rulings from the European Court of Justice**

#### **Discrimination by word equals discrimination by deed**

A case from Belgium will serve as a warning to employers to watch what they say as well as what they do. A door-fitting firm, 'NV Firma Feryn', tried to recruit fitters by means of a large vacancies sign at its premises on the road between Brussels and Antwerp. In an interview with the newspaper *De Standaard* one of the directors said that only Moroccans had applied for the jobs '...but we aren't looking for Moroccans. Our customers don't want them'. The Belgian equal opportunities body, CGKR, brought a case against Feryn on the grounds that their recruitment policy was discriminatory. However the local court rejected this as there was no evidence that a specific applicant had been turned down because of their ethnic origin. In reversing this decision the ECJ Advocate General took the view that such statements were enough to

presume that the firm's recruitment policy was discriminatory. It would then be up to the employer to prove that this was not so.

#### **Coleman final decision in favour of carers**

The final judgment of the ECJ on the case of Sharon Coleman has confirmed that she was discriminated against by her employer. By refusing Ms. Coleman flexible working arrangements so that she could care for her disabled son Attridge Law had breached the 2000 Directive on Equal Treatment in Employment which could be applied to 'associative discrimination'. Employers must make 'effective and practical measures to adapt the workplace to the disability' under the legislation but now this includes carers for disabled people as well. UK law which implemented the directive will now have to be changed as it restricts protection to disabled people themselves.

#### **France stress deal based on EU agreement**

FRENCH TRADE UNIONS AND EMPLOYERS HAVE REACHED agreement on the implementation of the EU stress deal hammered out between the EU social partners in 2004. In the same way as the previous accord on telework, this voluntary process stands in for an EU directive and must be ratified at national level. Although this was supposed to be concluded by October last year the French deal makes up for its lateness by adding extra requirements to the framework. Prevention, information and training are emphasised through dialogue and organisation within companies. Work life balance is also singled out, over and above the bare bones of the 2004 agreement. One contentious issue during negotiations was the definition of stress with employers seeking to focus on individuals while unions wanted to foreground organisational factors. The final text seems to lean to the union side where it

differs from the EU version but employers managed to avoid the classification of stress as a disease.

In identifying stress at a workplace the agreement mentions high levels of absence and resignations, raised accident rates and visits to medical services, and interpersonal conflicts, violence and self-harming, following the recent cases of work-related suicide in France (see issue 42). Anti-stress measures should include management support for individuals and teams aimed at matching control over work to responsibility, raising awareness of the problem through training for all staff, particularly managers, and informing and consulting workers in line with EU legislation.

Both sides now want the government to make the deal legally binding on all employers and employees. Trade union federations saw the agreement as an improvement on the EU framework but intended to start negotiations in individual industries while employers described it as a good compromise and as an educational tool.

### **Labour minister calls for Turkish shipyard closure as more workers die**

ANOTHER THREE WORKERS HAVE DIED in a continuing health and safety disaster in Turkish shipyards. Following the loss of two employees' lives in February (see issue 42), the latest accident occurred when a lifeboat was being tested. Reports suggest that a connecting rope snapped as workers were being used as 'human sandbags' to weigh down the vessel as it was lowered from a larger ship. Once again the Tuzla area of Istanbul was the scene of the deaths.

Only weeks before a training programme had begun and a government report had criticised many aspects of the Tuzla yards including lack

of space, quick expansion of production and a multiplication of sub-contractors. Labour Minister Faruk Çelik went so far as to call for the closure and relocation of a number of shipyards and said that 'Workers will not be legally employed in heavy and dangerous work without undergoing training and this rule will take effect as of Jan. 1'. However unions and employers both disagreed with the closure proposal: 'Nothing will change if the shipyards are moved to any other place without improving [the situation in] Tuzla', said Cem Dinç, the head of the Shipyard, Ship Construction and Repair Workers trade union while the head of the Shipbuilders Association denied that lack of space was a problem. Dinç believed that more rights for workers in education, social security and union organisation and the establishment of a health and safety commission would be more helpful.



Turkish shipyards are notorious for accidents

### **Repro-toxins left out of new directive**

AS THE EU IS CURRENTLY CONSIDERING the revision of its Carcinogens directive various proposals have been made as to which substances should be included. Now union health and safety experts have got wind of a plan to leave out so-called repro-toxins which can cause infertility, miscarriages and premature births. These include lead and phthalates, which were banned from babies'

teething rings some time ago. With the desire of reducing unnecessary regulation the Commission made it compulsory to conduct an economic and social impact assessment study before any directive is put forward. However in drawing up tender invitations for this study no mention is made of repro-toxins. Even more curious is the explanation given for this u-turn (the Commission was previously expressly in favour of including the substances). They contend that most of the repro-toxins are also mutagens and that these are already covered by existing laws but health and safety advisers at the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) have found that only about a third of substances classified by the EU as harmful to reproduction come under the mutagen or carcinogen heading.

The only conclusion that ETUC experts can draw is that 'a purely political decision that sacrifices the health of workers and future generations to the interests of some sections of industry' has been taken'.

### **EU poised to take the lead as Web 3.0 comes online, says Commissioner**

IF YOU'RE STILL BAFFLED BY TERMS LIKE 'Web 2.0', 'social networking' or even 'broadband' get ready for 'Web 3.0' and the 'Internet of Things'. The EU is already talking about them and urging both citizens and businesses to assist in their development. Definitions are often vague but Commissioner Viviane Reding, who looks after the information society and media, offers: 'Web 3.0 means seamless "anytime, anywhere" business, entertainment and social networking over fast reliable and secure networks'. Whereas in the first stage of the internet the user was essentially passive (read), in Web 2.0 the rise of weblogs, or blogs, and sites such as FaceBook and YouTube allowed ordinary people to upload material and participate (read/write). The next

stage envisages users editing web pages (read/write/execute) as well as computers and other devices that will 'understand' the internet better and perform tasks currently carried out by the human user. For instance heart monitors could use the web to send back continuous readings from a patient going about their daily business.

To make all this happen faster access speeds and greater mobility and reliability of networks are essential. While 93% of EU citizens now have access to broadband at speeds of more than 2 Megabits per second (Mbps), fibre optic cables and wireless (wi-fi) connections are likely to increase speeds much further. The Commission believes that local authorities can facilitate the digging of new ducts for broadband while fair competition should stimulate private companies to invest as internet enterprise software is expected to increase by 15% from 2006 to 2011 as data traffic multiplies by ten.

The Commission report also contains a mass of interesting statistics and charts which show that 35.6% of Danes use high-speed internet connections compared to 7.6% of Bulgarians, that the price of these links is 45 times higher in Lithuania than in France and that approximately 15% of web users enjoy speeds greater than 8 Mbps. It has also established a Broadband Performance Index that compares competition, coverage, speed and quality of internet across Member States. On this measure Sweden is top and Bulgaria again bottom with the UK coming in fourth.

### **TUC aims to reach Portuguese workers via the web**

OVER THE LAST TWENTY YEARS more than half a million Portuguese workers have come to the UK. Although they are legally entitled to the same rights at work as British employees they have often fallen victim to unscrupulous employers who take advantage of language problems and lack of knowledge of the local working culture. Consequently Portuguese workers have often featured in recent exposés of exploitation such as the 'TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment'. Now the Citizens Advice Bureau and Portuguese union confederation CGTP have joined with the British labour movement to create a web site that is designed to explain topics such as the national minimum wage, working time laws, holiday entitlement and sick pay. The Portuguese-language pages will also carry information on housing, health and living in the UK in general.

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: 'Portuguese workers are making a substantial contribution to all levels of Britain's economy ... but ... need help to understand and secure their rights. By using this new website .... migrant workers can get all the support and protection from crooked employers they are entitled to'.

### **European Parliament launches own online television channel**

IN FURTHER MOVES TO BRIDGE THE perceived gap between the citizens of the EU and its institutions the European Parliament has launched a new web site that will carry both live and recorded pictures of plenary sessions and committee meetings. Programmes will be translated into more than twenty languages, both by means of voice-overs and sub-titles.

Specifically aimed at young people with the intention of raising participation in the 2009 European elections, the channel will try to keep them 'informed about the activities and decisions of the directly-elected European parliament - decisions which have an impact on the everyday lives of almost 500 million citizens', according to the assembly's president, Hans-Gert Pöttering. Concerns about bias were dismissed by the MEP in charge of the project: 'Europarl TV will be totally objective and politically neutral. There is an editorial charter which ensures its objectivity will be respected' he insisted. Gary Titley, leader of the UK Socialist delegation, agreed, 'It is a good idea. The cost is not that great when spread among the 27 member states and it will address the problem of people repeatedly complaining that they do not know anything about the EU'. However further work seems to be needed as the *European Review* could not make it work on an Apple Mac.

#### **Reports, surveys and web sites mentioned in this section are available at:**

Communication on future networks and the internet

[http://ec.europa.eu/information\\_society/eur-ope/i2010/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/information_society/eur-ope/i2010/index_en.htm)

Trabalhar No Reino Unido (in Portuguese)

<http://www.trabalharnoreinounido.org/>

europarlTV

<http://www.europarltv.europa.eu/StartPage.aspx>

### Stats and facts

A recent survey by the Dublin-based European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions shows that workers in the United Kingdom still work longer hours than their counterparts over most of the EU. Only the accession of Romania and Bulgaria as Member States has lifted Britain from last place in the league table. In general, working hours are longer in the countries that joined after 2004, mainly in eastern Europe, than among the 'old' 15. The average number of hours worked by full time employees per week is 40.6 in the 'new' countries and 39.5 in the 'old'. However the UK figure of 41.4 is the third highest throughout the Community

When work hours negotiated by trade unions are considered the position is almost exactly reversed. At 37.3 the average collectively agreed normal weekly working hours in the UK are the third shortest, only in Denmark and France do unions get a better deal. Yet reductions in hours have not been very high up on the union agenda in the last few years; the figure across the whole EU reduced from 38.7 to 38.6 from 2006 to 2007. The exceptions were France where legislation led to four hours being shaved off work time, and Britain, Luxembourg, Portugal, and Sweden (1-2.5 hours reduction). Among the eastern Member States only Slovakia recorded 'appreciable reductions in working hours'; most of them stick to a standard 40-hour working week with no attempt at negotiation on this subject.

On annual leave the report makes the point that this is highly influential in determining how many hours a year are actually worked and that agreements in some countries are too complex for an average to be estimated. In the Member States for which meaningful figures

are available the average negotiated paid leave entitlement stood at 25.2 days per year in 2007 while among the 'new' countries the figure was 21.9. Statutory minima varied across the EU from 20 to 25 days with only the UK having recorded any change between 2006 and 2007, an increase of 4 days due to a change in the law.

Working time developments – 2007 is available at:  
[www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tno804029s/tno804029s.htm](http://www.eurofound.europa.eu/eiro/studies/tno804029s/tno804029s.htm)

Member State	Actual weekly hours	Collectively agreed weekly hours	Collectively agreed days annual paid leave	Statutory days minimum paid leave
France	37.7	35	25	25
Italy	38.4	38	28	20
Denmark	38.6	37	30	25
Belgium	38.8	37.6	---	20
Portugal	38.8	38.2	24.5	22
Ireland	38.9	39	---	20
Spain	39	37.9	---	22
Cyprus	39.1	38	20	20
Sweden	39.2	37.5	33	25
Finland	39.3	37.5	25	20
EU old 15	39.5	37.9	26.7	22.1
Luxembourg	39.8	39	28	25
Greece	39.9	40	23	20
Slovakia	39.9	38.8	21.1	20
EU27	40	38.5	25.2	21.4
Malta	40	40	---	20
Netherlands	40	37.5	25.6	25.6
Lithuania	40.3	40	---	20
Poland	40.4	40	---	20
Hungary	40.5	40	---	20
EU new 12	40.6	39.6	21.9	20.3
Latvia	40.6	40	---	20
Estonia	40.7	40	20	20
Slovenia	40.8	40	---	20
Austria	41.1	38.8	25	25
Germany	41.1	37.6	30	20
Czech Rep.	41.2	38	25	20
UK	41.4	37.3	24.6	24
Bulgaria	41.7	40	24	20
Romania	41.7	40	21	20

Figures are averages for 2007. Data for collectively agreed annual leave not available for the countries so indicated

### **Diary: conferences and courses**

#### **Protecting Those Who Serve – Preventing Violent and Abusive Attacks** 3 November

Public Service Partnership, The QEII Conference Centre, Broad Sanctuary, Westminster, London SW1P 3EE  
Public Service Partnership Ltd  
Tel: 0161 217 2500  
Fax: 0161 217 2501  
Email: [enquiries@pspltd.org](mailto:enquiries@pspltd.org)  
[http://www.pspevents.co.uk/protecting\\_london\\_2008/](http://www.pspevents.co.uk/protecting_london_2008/)

#### **New Trends in Safety and Health** 3-5 November

European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, Hotel Patria, Strbské Pleso, High Tatras, Slovakia  
Technical University of Kosice  
Tel: +421-55-602-2513  
Fax: +421-55-602-2501  
Email: [bozp2008@gmail.com](mailto:bozp2008@gmail.com)

#### **Health and Safety and Worker Involvement** 14 November

TUC/HSE, Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LS  
Email: [sertucevents@tuc.org.uk](mailto:sertucevents@tuc.org.uk)

#### **Mobility on the European Labour Market** 26-30 November

ETUI-REHS Education, Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5, box 7, B1210, Brussels, Belgium  
Valerica Dumitrescu  
Tel: +32-2-224-0528  
Email: [vdumitrescu@etui.org](mailto:vdumitrescu@etui.org)

### **European Health and Safety Week – October 20-24**

‘Healthy Workplaces. Good for you. Good for business.’ is the title of this year’s health and safety week organised by the European

Agency for Safety and Health at Work. They say ‘It is essential for the workforce to be consulted and involved in the risk assessment to ensure that hazards are identified not only from principles of knowledge but also by knowledge of working conditions and patterns of adverse effects upon workers’. Its aim is to involve workers on a local level in ensuring that employers identify risks and take reasonably practical measures to minimise them. It is especially aimed at small businesses. Part of a two year campaign on risk assessment the week will include events across Europe and is coordinated in the UK by the Health and Safety Executive. The TUC will also be organising various activities. The Wednesday of health and safety week is traditionally ‘national inspection day’ when all safety reps. are asked to inspect their workplace.

For a list of the TUC’s Risk Assessment courses during European Health and Safety week see <http://www.unionlearn.org.uk/education/learn-2407-fo.cfm>

