

[ETUC newsletter]



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Figure of the month

442 billion euros

In the context of its first one-year refinancing operation, the European Central Bank (ECB) injected 442 billion euros in the European monetary market at a one percent interest rate. More than 1,100 European banks have taken advantage of the funds.

(Source: Le Figaro)

A noter



Dear Colleagues,

Is casino capitalism making a comeback?

A recent ETUC report establishes that financial capitalism seems to have gone back to its 'good old' habits: indeed, the financial markets have resumed speculation on the price of raw materials, dragging the economy downwards, as if the past few months had never happened.

This situation is all the more serious given that these speculative operations are taking place at a time when the European Central Bank (ECB) is launching a record loan of over 400 billion euros at a rate of 1%, over one year, to over 1,100 banking institutions in the eurozone. In these circumstances, we have called on the ECB to put in place serious controls so as to guarantee that these funds are intended for productive investments, and not speculation.

In the political arena, the European Parliament elections delivered a record level of abstentions. ETUC is continuing to assess the parties in the new Parliament, and will address this matter at its next Executive Committee on 8 July.

Moreover, we have been disappointed at the conclusions of the mid-June European Council, in particular as regards the declaration on workers' rights, which fails to assert the primacy of workers' rights over the single market. Nowhere does this text mention the addition of a social progress protocol to the European treaties, or the need to revise the directive on the posting of workers. By confining themselves to the adoption of a declaration that is not legally binding, Europe's political leaders have relegated social questions to the back burner, forgetting the citizens. So, ETUC will have to continue to be active at this level.

John Monks
Secrétaire général

¹ Report entitled 'Green shoots of ... casino capitalism'





[ETUC in action]

SOCIAL DIALOGUE: European Social Partners revised agreement on parental leave

18/06/2009 - In the presence of Vladimír Špidla, European Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, the **European Social Partners** - namely, ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP - **have adopted an agreement revising their 1995 Framework Agreement on Parental Leave**. It is the first time that European Social Partners have agreed on the revision of a pre-existing framework agreement.

The **main improvements** of the new agreement in relation to the previous one are an **increase in the length of parental leave from three to four months**, **strengthening it as an individual right** and the **possibility for workers to request flexible working arrangements when returning from leave**. This agreement is to be implemented by a Council Directive on a proposal from the European Commission, according to Article 139 in the EC Treaty.

[Joint ETUC-BUSINESSEUROPE-UEAPME-CEEP press release Revised Framework Agreement on parental leave](#)



CONFERENCE

Cooperation project between Trade unions and SMEs

10/06/2009 - At a conference in Brussels, ETUC and the European craft and small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) employer organisation (UEAPME) have brought to a close a **joint project on common economic and social concerns**. The social partners presented an [expert report](#), calling for an increased partnership between trade unions and SMEs. ETUC Deputy General Secretary Maria Helena André expects *'with this project, to contribute to the creation of a climate of trust, dialogue and cooperation in SMEs'*.

[Joint ETUC-UEAPME press release](#)

[Trade Union agenda] June - July 2009

08-11/06/2009	European Public Service Union Congress (Brussels)	Congress Agenda
10/06/2009	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
08/07/2009	ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)	
15/07/2009	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	



[Dossier]

Towards an Erasmus for trade unions: a highly positive project

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has recently rounded off its project 'Towards an Erasmus for trade unions', via a conference designed to deliver a snapshot of this experiment and draw some lessons from it for the future. The purpose of the project was to promote mutual knowledge among ETUC member trade union organisations, with the exchange and mobility of trade unionist interns.

Some 10 national trade union organisations, plus two European sectoral federations, participated in the project, which was developed as part of the European Commission-funded programme 'Europe for citizens'. The geographical distribution of the participants was balanced, with trade union members from both old and new EU Member States involved.

The internships ran between **January and April 2009**, with stays abroad of **between two weeks and one month**, depending on the availability of the interns and the host organisations. Overall, **10 trade unionists from various sectors of the economy and various positions of responsibility within their home confederations participated in the exchanges.**



Odile Quentin, Director general of DG Education and Culture at the European Commission, at the closing conference

The voice of participants

The project's closing conference, which was held in Brussels, gave us the opportunity to meet the interns and ask them some questions about their experience. **The highly positive assessment is shared by all participants.**

Enrique Gil from the metalworkers' federation of Comisiones Obreras (CC.OO) in Spain, who spent a month with the Austrian trade union confederation ÖGB in Austria, has no hesitation in defining the experience as *'It was wonderful, perhaps the best experience I have ever had since being elected as a trade union member'*.

All of the participants got the chance to get a first-hand impression of how the host trade union was run. **Mariella Pezzulla**, who is responsible for human resources at the Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions CISL in Rome, Italy, set off with the aim of build-



John Monks issues a diploma to Enrique Gil to certify his internship

ing up her feeling of European citizenship. During her trade union Erasmus programme, she was able to compare the internal operating rules of the Spanish confederation Comisiones Obreras with those of her home organisation. Without overlooking the differences in terms of both internal organisation and the actual history of the Spanish organisation, she is highly enthusiastic about her internship, during which she reports feeling *'right at home'*.

The internship was not limited just to getting to know about the operation of another European trade union, it also involved gaining an understanding of the model of industrial relations in which the host trade union organisation was set. This was the case for the two Belgian interns, **Sébastien Robeet** and **Peter Tierens**, from the Confederation of Christian trade unions CSC. The two spent 15 days in Sweden at the Confederation of Professional Employees TCO, where they were able to observe the operation of the Swedish social system, and the role



[Dossier]

Towards an Erasmus for trade unions: a highly positive project (following)

played by the trade union movement. Likewise, **Kajetan Uriach**, an Austrian trade unionist from the federation VIDA, an affiliate to the ÖGB, did also his internship in Sweden. *'After this project, I've got one more reason to feel like a European, a European trade unionist'*, he reported to us at the beginning of our conversation. **Teodora Gheorghevici**, an expert in vocational training from the Romanian trade union 'Cartel Alfa', shares this opinion. She was able to gain a 360-degree picture of Belgian trade unionism thanks to numerous visits and meetings across the three Belgian regions Wallonia, Flanders and Brussels.

Relations with the European institutions, the Commission and European Parliament in particular, were what characterised the internship of **Istvan Hegy**, a young Hungarian trade unionist from the National Confederation of Trade Unions MSZOSZ. Mr Hegy travelled to Brussels for an internship with ETUF, the European Trade Union Federation, Textiles, Clothing and Leather. Being involved in the operation of European trade unionism at sectoral level directly at the heart of the capital of Europe helped to make his experience *'very positive, in fact unique, something that I'd recommend to any trade unionist in Europe'*.

The results achieved by this project would never have been so positive without the commitment of the mentors.

Helena Schulz Jimeno, who mentored Mariella Pezzulla at Comisiones Obreras, was very satisfied with the project. While admitting that there was a responsibility to make the intern feel welcome and at ease within the host organisation, she never perceived this experience

as a burden. Indeed, her perception was quite the opposite, *'it enriched all of us, in both professional and human terms'*. In addition, having enjoyed such a stimulating experience means that in future, she would have no hesitation about participating as an intern herself.

Suggestions for the future

The project's closing conference offered the opportunity to draw some lessons and put forward some suggestions for the future.

The highly positive assessment by all of the participants demonstrated that the decision to proceed with such a project was visionary, and that it met a demand from ETUC member organisations.

The participants made the solo the following suggestions:



During the closing conference of the project

- ▶ a desire to maintain more sustained ties among all the interns and with ETUC throughout the internship. One proposal was to organise several internships within the same period or in the same place;
- ▶ to use the interactive tool of blogging;
- ▶ to maintain the network thus created and to capitalise on their experience within their organisations and ETUC. One question that this raises is the certification of the experience acquired via the internship;
- ▶ the experience demonstrates that the interns' have many and various expectations of the programme, but they all want to benefit from such an internship in order to get to know both the organisation and the action being pursued by it on the ground in the host country.

To get the very most from this unique experience, it is important for such a project to be able to have access to more funding in the future, in order to allow more trade unionists to benefit from such an opportunity of mobility and internships. This would facilitate and increase mutual understanding and bring the European trade union level closer to the national and local levels, while putting Europe at the heart of trade union action.

Some participants would also like to combine mobility and exchange of knowledge with defending a common objective or demand, so as to contribute to the development of European trade unionism at the grass roots.

To sum up: a 'pilot' project which ETUC hopes to continue and be able to make into a 'permanent fixture'.



[EU Agenda]

Juni–July 2009

04–05/06/2009	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
04–07/06/2009	Elections for the renewal of the European Parliament (European Union)	
08/06/2009	Eurogroup Meeting (Luxembourg)	Meeting Agenda
08–09/06/2009	Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
09/06/2009	ECOFIN Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
09–10/06/2009	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
11/06/2009	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
15–16/06/2009	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
18–19/06/2009	European Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
25/06/2009	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	Council Agenda
01/07/2009	Meeting Commission – EU Swedish Presidency (Stockholm)	Meeting Agenda
06–09/07/2009	Informal meeting of Ministers for Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs (Jönköping)	Meeting Agenda
06/07/2009	Eurogroup Meeting (Brussels)	Meeting Agenda
07/07/2009	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda
08–10/07/2009	G–8 Summit (L’Aquila)	Summit Agenda
10/07/2009	ECOFIN Council (Budget) (Brussels)	Council Agenda
13–16/07/2009	Plenary Session at the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
15–16/07/2009	Plenary Session at the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
15–17/07/2009	Informal Meeting of Ministers for Justice and Home Affairs (Stockholm)	Meeting Agenda
23–24/07/2009	Informal Meeting of Energy Ministers (Åre)	Meeting Agenda
24–25/07/2009	Informal meeting of Environment Ministers (Åre)	Meeting Agenda
27–28/07/2009	General Affairs and External Relations Council (Brussels)	Council Agenda



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

European Summit: ETUC disappointed with the declaration on workers' rights

19/06/2009 – At the European Summit on 18–19 June, European leaders adopted the ‘**legal guarantees**’ allowing Ireland to organise a second referendum on the Lisbon Treaty. In this context, [the European trade union movement demanded](#) that the workers’ rights primacy on single market freedoms, the need to review the Posting of workers Directive as well as the inclusion of a Social Progress Protocol to the treaties should be seriously taken into account.

This was not the case as European leaders adopted a **non-legally binding** declaration at the summit. ETUC General Secretary John Monks declared his disappointment *‘with the text and with the status it has. This relegation of social questions is not good enough’*. He added that: *‘The Council is failing Europe’s citizens’*.

[ETUC press release](#)

[EU Czech Presidency press release](#)

International Refugee Day: ETUC calls to end inhumane practices

20/06/2009 – At the occasion of the International Refugee Day on 20 June, ETUC called on the European Union to ensure the **full protection of refugees**, according to international obligations. ETUC also called on the EU and its member states to **immediately stop the current inhumane practices against migrants**.

[ETUC press release](#)

Editorial Team

MANAGING EDITOR: **John Monks**

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: **Patricia Grillo**

EDITOR: **Daniele Melli**

Come back of casino capitalism?

24/06/2009 – A recent ETUC report clearly shows that financial markets are once again starting to **speculate on a new commodity bubble**, thereby driving oil and commodity prices upwards and the economy downwards. Meanwhile, the **European Central Bank (ECB) provided hundreds of billions of euro to European banks on a one year loan**. ETUC demanded to **put in place the necessary instruments to ensure banks use liquidity for productive investment and not for speculation**. John Monks declared: *‘We have asked for public money to support public investment, not “free lunches” for banks collaborating with speculators.’*

[ETUC press release](#)

[‘Green shoots...of casino capitalism’ report](#)

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