

Emergence Conference 'where in the world'

Quality employment in 'e-Europe'

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The need for a 'Social Europe'

The ETUC represents working men and women in Europe. Our aim is to ensure that European integration is a political and social project, and not just an economic one, and that the process itself has a positive impact on other regions in the world.

The harmonisation of living and working conditions; economic and social cohesion; advanced systems of industrial relations – these are fundamental parts of any society, and they are ones which we want to develop to the full in Europe and elsewhere. These elements are also productive factors and essential to e-europe: how can we develop high quality employment and high quality employees if workers distrust the future and are frightened of it?

Trade unions in Europe have for some time now recognised that change is no longer constrained by boundaries, even European ones. Since the ETUC's origin in 1973 we have sought to develop trade union strategies which are able to influence the direction of change towards our vision of a social Europe.

Change in itself is neither good nor bad. What is important is to remember is that we *can* shape the direction of change: the choices we make may determine whether the consequences of change are negative or positive.

This belief is at the heart of trade union action. And for this reason, we think it is important to improve the way that we understand, anticipate and manage change - and hence our interest in the Emergence project.

Trade unions believe that if we are to manage technological and other types of changes taking place in our societies we have to find a balance between promoting economic growth and modernising the economy and strengthening the social dimension.

This balance can only be achieved through the (re) regulation — or governance — of market forces, at all the different levels from the local to the global — in order that economic progress is at the service of women and men, and not the other way round.

For the ETUC it is essential that the new economy is part of a societal and social vision and not seen as only an economic and technical event (and the same could be said for the Euro, or of enlargement *etc.* ...). A central part of this social vision is full employment; it is also high quality employment ('more and better jobs'); and it is also a developed system of social protection.

The EU will adopt in December in Nice a new five-year Social Agenda which places social policy for the first time in a broader economic context, and which gives social policy an important place in underpinning the transformation of Europe towards a 'knowledge society.' It will also adopt a solemn declaration concerning a Charter of fundamental rights which should strengthen the social dimension of Europe. We need to take advantage of these developments to push for social progress.

Building Europe a social dialogue

European social partners contribute to a successful, dynamic and 'social' Europe, both jointly and apart, including by:

- European framework agreements which aim to provide common minimum standards and improve the quality of employment. These can have both contractual and legislative force. Agreements to date on parental leave, part-time work, and fixed-term contracts; plus negotiations in progress on temporary agency work, and, possibly telework, and training and life-long learning.
- Involvement in European employment policy (guidelines and National Action Plans) and macro-economic policy (including macro dialogue). In the guidelines focus is on two areas:
 - Modernising and improving work organisation, and not only as concerns the economy. We know that only 10% or so of European companies use advanced forms of group work. And if you look at the result of surveys on working conditions (e.g., European foundation) surprisingly high numbers of men and women still have very little control or autonomy in their work (work rhythm, when to take rest periods *etc.*). Jobs that are sometime presented as being 'new' IT jobs — such as call centres — are often really only old wine in new bottles. Evidence that working conditions for many workers are deteriorating.
 - Improving education and training — or life-long learning. This is certainly a key to upgrading jobs (although 25% in EU lack basic literacy / 8% Sweden) and evidence suggests high-skilled workers get more than their fair share of training opportunities. We need to have a right to life-long learning for all workers. (But more attention also needs to be given to developing new jobs in services, where most job growth is, and in valuing these and existing service sector (often women's) jobs better. Jobs need to be brought to where people live, but also geographical mobility needs to be discussed more.)

Social dialogue in Europe is also important in the different sectors of the economy on working and employment conditions, including industrial change, delocalisation, human rights (textiles, commerce) on training and new job profiles (banking, graphical) on working time (transport, agriculture).

Also, strengthening European Works Councils (600+ or 18,000 worker and trade unions representatives), and linking these to a sectoral dimension (e.g. car industry), and international dimension, is a key challenge (and ETUC campaign).

Developing e-rights for workers and trade unions

A final word about e-rights. Data privacy for workers needs to be assured (no random snooping by employers of e-mails and internet usage — not really the right way to develop creative and motivated staff either!) and trade union and worker representatives should have the right to communicate with members via e-mail, and vice-versa.

Face-to-face contact is always necessary, but 'e-organisation' is a useful complement....

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