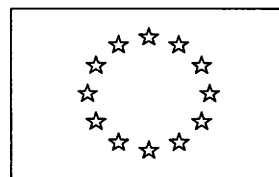


# European Trade Union Information Bulletin



ISSUE 3 of 1997

## Special Jobs Summit

### Member States Agree On Common Action To Fight Unemployment

The Luxembourg Special European Council meeting which took place on the 20th and 21st of November and concentrated entirely on the problems posed by unemployment in the European Union marked a new determination by the fifteen Member States to forge a co-operative approach to fighting unemployment, which they all agreed, is the major challenge facing the Union today.

The agreement to put into immediate effect the procedures on employment policy set out in the draft Amsterdam Treaty means that a new system for the co-ordination of national employment policies will be in place for 1998. Equally, the decision to establish twice-yearly meetings between the Council Troika (past, present and future Council presidencies) and the European Social Partners means that representatives of employers and trade unions will be fully involved in the determination of the future employment strategy at European Union level. The Summit also gave support to an additional 10 billion ECU of support from the European Investment Bank to support employment generation in small and medium sized enterprises and by pressing ahead with major trans-European network projects.

In their comments on the draft Commission Guidelines for employment policies in 1998, the Council showed their willingness to accept firm targets and deadlines on issues such as youth unemployment and training. Whilst nobody is suggesting that these measures alone will solve the unemployment problem, they do indicate a new willingness to work together in the vital task of ensuring that the full resources of the Union are directed at the objective of job creation.

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**BACKGROUND  
BRIEFING**

# The Luxembourg Employment Summit

*Summit calls for immediate application of Amsterdam Employment Chapter and close involvement of social partners.*

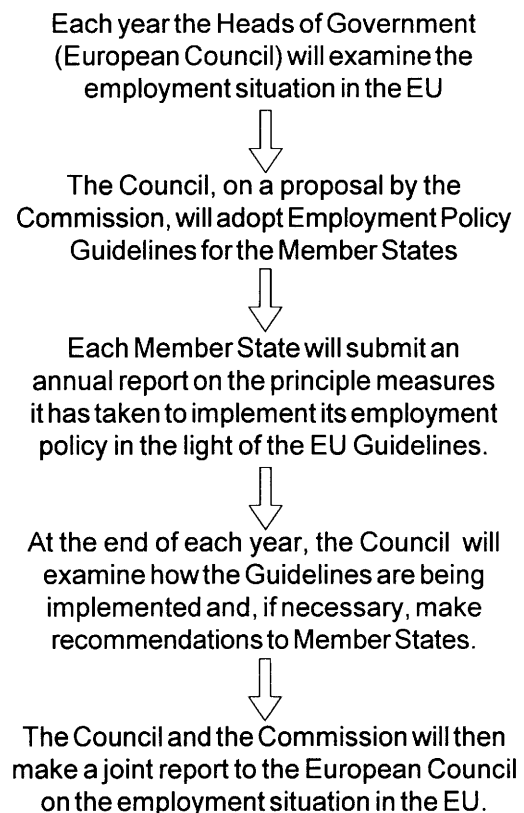
On the 20th and 21st of November, the political leaders of the 15 EU Member States held their first ever special summit meeting devoted to the question of employment. Insisting that the issue of employment was central to the concerns of European citizens, the European Council emphasised that every effort must be made to combat unemployment, "the unacceptable level of which poses a threat to the cohesion of our societies".

The main decisions reached by the Summit were as follows:

- The provisions of the draft Amsterdam Treaty on employment are to be put into effect immediately and Employment Guidelines for 1998 adopted by the end of the year.
- A twice-yearly meeting between the social partners, the Council Troika and the Commission is to be instituted to review employment policy and the implementation of the Social Charter.
- High-level expert working groups to be set up to analyse industrial change and anticipate and guard against detrimental economic and social consequences.
- An additional ECU 10 billion of EIB funding to be made available for support of SMEs, new technology and trans-European networks.
- An ECU 450 million European Employment Initiative to aid innovatory and job-creating SMEs is called for.
- Member States are called on to strengthen their economic policy co-ordination.
- Specific targets are recommended for the 1998 Employment Guidelines in terms of youth and long-term unemployment and training.
- Social partners are invited to negotiate agreements on modernising work organisation covering flexibility and reducing working time.

## The Co-ordination of Employment Policy

The Employment Summit decided to immediately put into effect the special provisions contained in the draft Article 128 of the Treaty on a co-ordinated employment strategy. This is a similar procedure for dealing with the co-ordination of employment policies to the one that already exists for the co-ordination of economic policies. The procedure will be as follows:



The Summit went on to examine the Commission Communication on draft employment guidelines for 1998 and adopted a number of recommendations, which are summarised below. The Council invited the Commission to submit at an early date its draft guidelines for 1998 so that these could be considered at the December European Council meeting. They have called for the national employment action plans based on these guidelines to be submitted to the Council for examination before the Cardiff European Council in June 1998 so that Guidelines for 1999 can be set in December 1998.

## The Role of the Social Partners

The Special European Council examined ways of more fully involving the social partners in the future determination of a co-ordinated employment strategy. The Presidency Conclusions stated that, as part of the necessary strengthening of the social dialogue,



the social partners at all levels will be involved in all stages of this approach and will have their contribution to make to the implementation of the Guidelines. It was decided that there should be regular twice-yearly meetings between the social partners, the Council Troika (the political leaders of the past, present and future Council presidency) and the Commission before each European Council meeting. "In the course of such contacts between the Council and the social partners, a detailed exchange of views will in particular be held on the implementation of the 1989 Community Charter of Fundamental Social Rights of Workers".

In their conclusions on the Commission Communication on draft Guidelines for 1998, the European Council called on the social partners to:

- at their various levels of responsibility and action, to conclude as soon as possible agreements with a view to increasing the possibilities for training, work experience, traineeships or other measures likely to promote employability;
- to negotiate, at the appropriate levels, in particular at sectoral and enterprise levels, agreements to modernise the organisation of work, including flexible working arrangements, with the aim of making undertakings productive and competitive and achieving the required balance between flexibility and security. Such agreements may, for example, cover the expression of working time as an annual figure, the reduction of working hours, the reduction of overtime, the development of part-time working, lifelong training and career breaks.

### The Wider Policy Context

The Luxembourg Employment Summit recognised that employment policy could not be considered in isolation and the Presidency Conclusions also relate to the wider policy context. The Summit emphasised that there is no real, lasting prospect of expanding employment without a favourable economic environment, which requires a sound macro-economic framework and a genuine internal market. With regard to macro-economic policy, they said, it is essential for the Union to pursue a policy of growth geared to stability, sound public finances, pay restraint and structural reform. To that end, Member States will step up the co-ordination of their economic policies.

Recent economic growth, the European Council warned, will not in itself make up for the job losses suffered in the early 1990s or to achieve the rate of employment growth needed to get most of the

unemployed into work. In spite of the efforts already made, Member States must continue to implement structural reforms required in all areas and must better co-ordinate their employment policies.

The Summit also dealt with the need for a more proactive industrial policy. It felt that particular attention should be given to sectors undergoing major industrial change and called for a high-level expert working party operating under the Commission's authority to analyse likely industrial changes in the Community and to look into ways of anticipating them better so as to guard against their economic and social effects in a manner consistent with the principles of the Treaty. After consultation of the social partners a first report should be submitted to the Council for subsequent submission to the Cardiff European Council. Finally, the Summit called on both European and national legislators to press on with their efforts to simplify the regulatory and administrative environment for businesses and especially small and medium-sized enterprises.

### Funding Employment Growth

The Summit approved two new financial initiatives designed to help stimulate employment growth:

1. The EIBs Amsterdam Special Action Programme. This European Investment Bank initiative will run until the end of the year 2000. The Programme involves three sets of complementary measures:

- (i) The creation of a ECU 1 billion special fund to help fund high technology and high growth SMEs
- (ii) The development and reinforcement of the EIB's financing in the areas of education, health, urban environment and environmental protection.
- (iii) Giving a new impetus to financing trans-European networks and other large infrastructure networks.

These measures will provide an additional ECU 10 billion of funding above the Bank's current activity which, in turn, could support a total investment of over ECU 30 billion.

2. The European Employment Initiative.

The European Council welcomed the EP's initiative aimed at providing for the strengthening of budgetary resources earmarked for employment. It called on Parliament and the Council to formalise their agreement and the Commission to make proposals, as soon as possible, for new financial instruments to support innovatory and job-creating small and medium-sized enterprises, so that the Council can adopt them speedily. These new initiative should reinforce the European Technology Facility, financed by the EIB, by opening a "risk capital window", support the creation of transnational joint ventures



and establish a special guarantee fund to facilitate risk-taking by institutions providing finance for small and medium-sized enterprises.

### **The Commission Communication on Employment Guidelines for 1998**

The Luxembourg Employment Summit examined the Commission Communication on Employment Policy Guidelines for 1998. This is a preliminary document but it, along with the European Council conclusions, will form the basis of the draft employment guidelines that the Commission have been asked to submit in time for the December European Council meeting. Amongst the recommendations for action listed by the European Council are the following:

#### **Youth and long-term unemployment:**

Member States will ensure:

- that every unemployed young person is offered a new start before reaching six months of unemployment, in the form of training, retraining, work practice, a job or other employability measure.
- unemployed adults are also offered a fresh start before reaching twelve months of unemployment by one of the aforementioned means or, more generally, by accompanying individual vocational guidance.

#### **Active Employment Market Measures:**

Each Member State will:

- endeavour to increase significantly the number of persons benefiting from active measures to improve their employability. In order to increase the numbers of unemployed who are offered training or any similar measure, it will in particular fix a target, in the light of its starting situation, of gradually achieving the average of the three most successful Member States, and at least 20%.

#### **Easing the transition from school to work:**

Member States will:

- improve the quality of their school systems in order to reduce substantially the number of young people who drop out of the school system early;
- make sure they equip young people with greater ability to adapt to technological and economic changes and with skills relevant to the labour market, where appropriate by implementing or developing apprenticeship training.

#### **Making it easier to start up and run businesses:**

Member States will:

- give particular attention to reducing significantly the overhead costs and administrative burdens for businesses, and especially small and medium-sized enterprises, in particular when hiring additional workers;
- encourage the development of self-employment by examining, with the aim of reducing, any obstacles which may exist, especially those within tax and social security regimes, to moving to self-employment and the setting up of small businesses, in particular for employed persons.

#### **Exploiting the opportunities for job creation:**

Member States will:

- investigate measures to exploit fully the possibilities offered by job creation at local level in the social economy and in new activities linked to needs not yet satisfied by the market, and examine, with the aim of reducing, any obstacles in the way of such measures.
- in terms of making the taxation system more employment friendly, set a target, if necessary and taking account of its present level, for gradually reducing the overall tax burden and, where appropriate, a target for gradually reducing the fiscal pressure on labour and non-wage labour costs
- examine, if appropriate, the desirability of introducing a tax on energy or on pollutant emissions or any other tax measure;
- examine, without obligation, the advisability of reducing the rate of VAT on labour-intensive services not exposed to cross-border competition.

#### **Modernising work organisation:**

- Member State will examine the possibility of incorporating in its law more adaptable types of contract, taking into account the fact that forms of employment are increasingly diverse. Those working under contracts of this kind should at the same time enjoy adequate security and higher occupational status, compatible with the needs of business.

#### **Supporting adaptability in enterprises:**

Member States will:

- re-examine the obstacles, in particular tax obstacles, to investment in human resources and possibly provide for tax or other incentives for the development of in-house training; they will also examine any new regulations to make sure they will contribute to reducing barriers to employment and helping the labour market adapt to structural change in the economy.

**Tackling gender gaps , reconciling work and family life and facilitating return to work:**

Member States will:

- attempt to reduce the gap in unemployment rates between women and men by actively supporting the increased employment of women and will act to reverse the under-representation of women in certain economic sectors and occupations and their over-representation in others.
- strive to raise levels of care provision where some needs are not met.

- give specific attention to women, and men, considering a return to the paid workforce after an absence and, to that end, they will examine the means of gradually eliminating the obstacles in the way of such return.

**Promoting the integration of people with disabilities into working life:**

Member States will:

- give special attention to the problems people with disabilities encounter in participating in working life.

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## ETUC WELCOMES RESULTS OF LUXEMBOURG EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) has welcomed the outcome of the Luxembourg Special Employment Summit saying that it "could mark a significant change in the European approach to fighting unemployment". The ETUC says that the conclusions are more concrete and less wordy than in the past and that they have not been inspired by "simplistic deregulation theories". The ETUC believes that whilst the first set of measures that have been put into place may be in themselves limited, the real breakthrough is in the procedures which have been adopted "which make it possible to take more far-reaching steps in the future". The ETUC statement says that the role of the social partners is underlined on a number of occasions. With the new Troika meetings, the Council will have direct relations with the social partners and this, the ETUC believes, will strengthen European social dialogue, including dialogue at sectoral level. In recognising that the EU must directly address the problems of industrial change and its impact on employment, the Council has given a first response to trade union demands, says the ETUC.

The ETUC also welcomes the call for the co-ordination of economic policy to be stepped up, which the ETUC believes is essential if higher and more employment-creating growth is to be assured. The ETUC is now looking to the December European Council meeting to build on these conclusions and adopt a "Pact for Economic Co-ordination" which will balance and complete the Stability Pact. The ETUC is, however, critical of some aspects of the Summit. It believes that no progress was achieved on countering "tax dumping" and its adverse effects on employment. On the practical role of the social partners, the ETUC notes that the Summit called for negotiations on access to training and on the reorganisation and reduction of working time. It says that trade unions are ready to accept their responsibilities, but employers must do likewise - at both European and national levels.

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### European Union Employment Policy : Key Documentation

In preparation for the Employment Summit the Commission published a number of key documents which present a background analysis of the current employment situation, a review of action already being taken by Member States and a set of suggestions for future action at European and national level.

The **1997 Employment in Europe Report** addresses two sets of connected and overlapping issues: the policy challenges for employment which face the Union at the turn of the century, and those which are created by the move to Economic and Monetary Union.

The **draft Guidelines for Member States Employment Policies in 1998** contain firm targets with deadlines for action and form the basis of the final recommendations the Commission will submit to the December 1997 European Council.

The **draft Joint Employment Report covering the year 1997** is mainly based on Member States submissions concerning the implementation of their multiannual employment programmes, and on an examination of the various actions undertaken at Community level.

**FOCUS ON.....**

# Information and Consultation Rights at National Level

**Background:**

The longest running saga in the history of European social policy has undoubtedly been the tortuous progress of proposals on worker participation in the European Union. Originally submitted as the draft Fifth Directive on Company Law back in 1971, the proposals have been theoretically "on the table" ever since. Never achieving the necessary unanimous support at the Council, the proposal has been bounced between institutions and overtaken by event after event. It has also appeared in a number of guises, one of the most recent being as a draft regulation on a European Company Statute. Following the successful adoption of the European Works Council Directive (which applies to European-scale undertakings as against large national firms in the case of the Fifth Directive/ European Company Statute proposals) the Commission decided to reassess the current state of proposals on participation and in November 1995 they issued a Communication on the subject.

In its Communication, the Commission put forward the suggestion of adapting the mechanisms incorporated into the European Works Council (EWC) Directive as the basis for a Directive on information and consultation in major undertakings at national level. But the debates which followed the Commission's Communication made it clear that the mere application of the mechanisms provided for in the EWC Directive was not sufficient to overcome the opposition of a number of Member States and social partners to the adoption of the regulation on the European Company Statute. The Commission therefore decided, in November 1996, to establish a High level Expert Group under the chairmanship of the former European Commission Vice-President, Etienne Davignon, in order to try and identify a possible solution which would meet everyone's concerns. The Davignon Group's report was presented to the European Commission meeting on the 14th May 1997.

**The Davignon Group Report:**

The Davignon Group concentrated almost entirely on the question of the European Company Statute. Basically this would allow firms to register as a European Company (SE) in certain circumstances. In such cases a set of common European rights and duties would apply to the SE, amongst which would be the requirement to negotiate a system of informing and consulting employees in the SE.

**The Davignon Group Report**  
**Main Conclusions**

1. The Groups analysis of national systems of information and consultation showed that there were more differences than similarities. They concluded that there was **no "ideal system"** and that general harmonisation was not possible.
2. Given the variety of national systems, the different combinations of national systems that might exist in a particular SE and the range of specific characteristics that any SE might have, the **best systems** of worker involvement was, in the Group's view, the one that was **negotiated on an ad hoc basis** for that SE. Negotiation between management and the representatives of the workers was therefore the strongly preferred route.
3. **Negotiation should be compulsory**, but to make sure that it happens in practice and that both sides negotiate seriously, there should be a **time-limit** to the negotiation (within 3 months of the approval of the creation of the SE by the general meetings of the participating companies) and on the expiry of the time-limit, **reference rules** should apply.
4. Negotiations would begin before the registration of the S.E. The rules for selecting the negotiators on the worker's side should be based on those in the European Works Councils Directive. **The negotiators should be free to agree what they like** and not be subject to any minimum rules.
5. **The rules which would apply if no agreement was reached would be the same for all SEs.** These rules would include information and consultation rules which represented a strengthening of those in the EWC Directive.
6. In addition, **worker representatives would have the right to be full members of the board or the supervisory board** (in a two board system). The Group suggest that one fifth of the seats on these bodies (and at least 2 seats) should be reserved for member designated by the workforce.

The conclusions of the Davignon Group were considered by the European Council and the European Parliament in May and June 1997. At the same time other developments were underlining the need for solutions to be found.

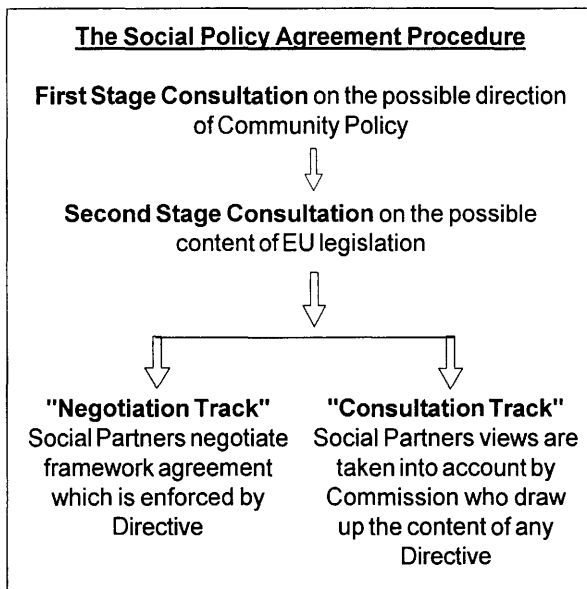


**The Renault Crisis:**

In March 1997, management at the Renault car group decided to close the Belgium production facility at Vilvoorde. This decision was taken without any prior consultations with workers representatives either in the context of the Renault European Works Council or the requirements of the EU Collective Redundancy Directive. It highlighted the limitations of the existing system and emphasised the need for the fundamental right of workers to be informed of and consulted on changes that are likely to impact on, them to be more firmly enshrined in either law or collective agreement.

**First Stage Consultation:**

The European Commission response to the Davignon Group Report and the legislative shortcomings highlighted by the Renault affair was to launch, in June 1997, a "First Stage" consultation with the European Social Partners on the issue of information and consultation at national level. This represents the initial stage of the procedure set out in the Social Policy Agreement annexed to the Maastricht Treaty.



In launching the First Stage Consultation, Social Affairs Commissioner Pdraig Flynn underlined the need to existing Community and national legislation in order to take into account:

- the need to respect of the existence of a fundamental social right of employees to be informed and consulted in advance on any decisions likely to affect them;
- the effectiveness of the process of consultation of employees which would permit a suitable response to the processes of change arising from economic and technical trends;
- the recognition that the improvement of the competitiveness of European firms through increased productivity is better achieved by a

workforce which is more committed and more willing to accept new types of work organisation;

- the fact that these procedures enhance job security through the assurance that, by closely involving employees or their representatives, the process of change will be managed in such a way as to strike a balance between employees' needs and interests and those of the firm;
- the need to ensure the development of effective consultation, generating a collaborative spirit;
- the importance of preventing the risks and anticipating the problems by introducing efficient systems of forward management of employment.

**Second Stage Consultation:**

On the 5th of November, the Commission launched a Second Stage Consultation with the European-level social partners on the possible content of EU policy in the sphere of information and consultation at national level. Noting the results of the First Stage Consultation, the Commission said that all the organisations consulted acknowledged the importance of informing and consulting workers. Nevertheless, differing views on the best way forward emerged. The trade unions favoured an EU initiative and the establishment of binding rules, whilst the employers did not accept the need for a European-level initiative.

In its consultation document, the Commission says that gaps do exist in the existing legislation of Member States and that action at European level is necessary to close these gaps. In particular they point out the need to:

- develop arrangements for anticipating and forestalling the social consequences which may arise from changes in the life, organisation and running of a company;
- strengthen the link between information and consultation on strategic and economic issues and consultation on how to address the social consequences arising therefrom.

The Commission suggests measures in three areas:

- Mechanisms that allow early identification of negative social consequences of changes in work organisation.
- The establishment of permanent, structured mechanisms for informing/consulting workers.
- The introduction of effective sanctions to be applied in cases of violation of the workers' right to be informed and consulted.

The Social Partners must now decide whether to negotiate a Framework Agreement (in which case all legislative initiatives will be suspended for nine months) or submit their views to the Commission and let it draft a legislative proposal.

**FOCUS ON.....**

# Employment and Labour Market Statistics

As part of the preparation for the Special European Council Employment Summit, Eurostat - the Statistical Office of the European Community - published a special compilation of statistics on employment and the labour market in EU Member States (Eurostat Memo 11/97). The following statistics are taken from that document.

**Employment Rates in Member States 1996**

The "employment rate" is a measure of the people in employment as a percentage of the total population aged between 15 and 64. The first column shows the total percentage of people in employment, the second the percentage of part-time workers.

Member State	Total	Part-Time
EU15	60.4	-
Belgium	56.6	7.9
Denmark	75.5	15.7
Germany	62.9	10.4
Greece	56.9	2.6
Spain	47.2	3.6
France	59.7	9.5
Ireland	56.3	6.3
Italy	51.4	3.3
Luxembourg	59.6	4.5
Netherlands	65.1	24.7
Austria	69.8	9.7
Portugal	66.0	4.4
Finland	61.7	6.8
Sweden	70.3	16.2
UK	69.8	16.3

**Employment Rate Of People Working More Than 10 Hours Per Week, 1996  
% of Population Aged 15-64**

Belgium	53.7	Luxembourg	56.2
Denmark	59.9	Netherlands	55.7
Germany	62.1	Austria	60.7
Greece	53.6	Portugal	59.4
Spain	44.1	Finland	52.9
France	51.5	Sweden	60.5
Ireland	50.3	UK	59.1
Italy	47.5		

Whilst a considerable variation in the total employment rate is noticeable (47.2% in Spain up to 75.5% in Denmark), the variation is much less marked when the lower elements of part-time working are removed

from the calculation. Thus taking employees working more than 10 hours per week, the range is from 44% in Spain to 62% in Germany.

**Social Contributions of Employers and Employees as Percentage of Total Social Protection Receipts 1994**

Social protection systems are financed by a combination of charges on employers and employees and contributions from the state via general taxation.

The following figures show the % of total social protection costs accounted for by direct contributions from employers and employees.

Belgium	67.2	Luxembourg	48.0
Denmark	19.3	Netherlands	57.2
Germany	60.9	Austria	53.2
Greece	72.3	Portugal	40.6
Spain	59.6	Finland	48.9
France	71.2	Sweden	41.0
Ireland	36.7	UK (1993)	58.0
Italy	56.8		

Employers are generally faced with two types of labour costs. Direct costs include wages, bonuses and allowances. Indirect costs include state social security contributions, voluntary social security contributions, direct social benefits, vocational training and other social costs. The following table examines indirect labour costs in industry as a percentage of total labour costs.

**Indirect Labour Costs as a Percentage of Total Labour Costs in Industry, 1988 & 1992**

Member State	1988	1992
Belgium	30.6	32.1
Denmark	3.8	6.8
Germany	23.7	22.2
Greece	20.0	21.0
Spain	25.1	26.4
France	32.0	31.4
Ireland	17.8	17.3
Italy	30.0	29.6
Luxembourg	16.8	15.9
Netherlands	27.1	25.1
Austria	24.7	24.5
Portugal	25.8	25.9
Finland	24.1	24.1
Sweden	30.2	31.3
UK	14.5	15.4





**People Unemployed For A Year Or More As A Percentage Of Total Unemployment 1991 - 1996**

Member State	1991	1996
EU15	-	48
Belgium	61	61
Denmark	31	27
Germany	31	48
Greece	47	56
Spain	49	53
France	38	38
Ireland	60	59
Italy	67	65
Luxembourg	27	28
Netherlands	41	45
Austria	-	26
Portugal	38	50
Finland	-	33
Sweden	-	19
UK	28	40

Statistics show that long-term unemployment is a significant problem in all Member States, and in six Member States more than half of all unemployed workers have been unemployed for a year or more. The lack of training and qualifications is often seen as an important factor. The following table looks at the % of those leaving the education system with only the very minimum of educational qualifications.

**Percentage of 15-24 year olds leaving the education system with at most only the first level of secondary education, 1996**

The first level of secondary education means without taking A levels, baccalaureate, Abitur or equivalent. The final column shows the changes between 1992 & 1996

Member State	Total	Boys	Girls	Change
EU15	46	49	44	-
Belgium	28	31	24	-7.2
Denmark	38	40	37	2.9
Germany	26	25	27	2.9
Greece	40	46	34	-6.6
Spain	66	71	60	-7.2
France	34	37	31	-2.0
Ireland	35	42	27	-10.8
Italy	59	63	55	-2.3
Luxembourg	63	61	66	-4.3
Netherlands	44	50	39	-
Austria	23	19	26	-
Portugal	79	83	74	-7.8
Finland	31	31	30	-
Sweden	27	26	27	-
UK	50	49	51	-3.4

Progress has been made over recent years in increasing initial education and vocational training as can be seen from the following table.

**Age at which at least 50% of young people are in the labour market, 1987 & 1995**

Note: In some countries, such as Denmark, short part-time jobs are frequent.

	'87	'95		'87	'95
EU15	18	20	Italy	20	21
Belgium	21	22	Lux.	19	21
Denmark	16	16	Neth.	18	18
Germany	18	19	Austria	-	17
Greece	21	21	Portugal	17	21
Spain	19	21	Finland	-	19
France	20	22	Sweden	-	20
Ireland	18	20	UK	16	17

The final two tables examines the increasing use of fixed-term contracts and the decline - in most Member States of full-time employees with contracts of indeterminate duration.

**Percentage of full-time and part-time employees with fixed-term contracts 1983 and 1996**

	'83	'96		'83	'96
Belgium	5.4	5.9	Lux.	3.2	2.6
Denmark	-	11.2	Neth.	5.8	12.0
Germany	-	11.0	Austria	-	8.0
Greece	16.2	11.0	Portugal	-	10.4
Spain	-	33.6	Finland	-	17.3
France	3.3	12.5	Sweden	-	11.6
Ireland	6.1	9.2	UK	5.5	6.9
Italy	6.6	7.5			

**Full-time employees with contracts of indeterminate duration 1990 & 1996**

	'90	'96		'90	'96
Belgium	84	80	Lux.	92	91
Denmark	68	69	Neth.	65	58
Germany	75	73	Austria	-	79
Greece	82	87	Portugal	79	84
Spain	68	63	Finland	-	76
France	79	75	Sweden	-	66
Ireland	86	83	UK	75	70
Italy	92	88			

**Source:**

*Eurostat Key Data on EU Employment Memo 11/97, 19th November 1997*

**FOCUS ON.....**

# The Future of the European Union Structural Funds

**Background**

The European Structural Funds is the term used to denote the European Social Fund (ESF, established 1958), the Guidance Section of the European Agriculture Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF, established 1962), and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF, established 1975). Whilst initially these operated as three separate funding mechanisms, a major reform in 1989 co-ordinated their activities and gave them a common set of objectives. The work of the funds is organised in six-year "programming periods" each of which has its own set of objectives.

**Structural Fund Objectives 1994 - 1999**Objective 1:

Assisting less prosperous regions.

Objective 2:

Restructuring regions affected by industrial decline.

Objective 3:

Combating long-term unemployment, facilitating the integration into working life of young people and those at risk of exclusion from the labour market, and the promotion of equal opportunities for men and women in the labour market.

Objective 4:

Adapting the workforce to industrial change and to changes in production systems.

Objective 5:

(a) Speeding up the restructuring of agriculture and fisheries, and  
(b) furthering the development of rural areas.

Objective 6:

Assisting the development of sparsely populated regions.

**Community Initiatives**

In addition to the main objectives there are currently a large number of "Community Initiatives" - individual focused funds which make use of finance from the main Structural Funds to achieve specific objectives in line with the overall Structural Fund objectives. Current Community initiatives include the following:

**NOW (New Opportunities for Women)**

Aims to promote equal opportunities of employment for women, particularly through training and access to the labour market.

Budget 1994-99: ECU 496 million

**HORIZON:**

Aims to improve access to the labour market for handicapped people and other disadvantaged groups. Budget 1994-1999: ECU 513 million.

**YOUTHSTART:**

Aims to promote the integration of young people into the labour market.

Budget 1994 - 1999: ECU 441 million.

**ADAPT:**

Aims to assist the adaption of workers to industrial change through vocational training.

Budget 1994-1999: ECU 1.4 billion

In addition, a number of Community Initiatives are dedicated to the regeneration and reconversion of areas where certain declining industries have previously predominated (RECHAR - coal industry, RETEX - textile industry, RESIDER - steel industry etc).

**The Scale of the Structural Funds**

During 1995, Structural Fund expenditure on the six main objectives totalled ECU 21.9 billion. Of this total, some 70% of all payments went to Objective 1 regions (less prosperous regions). Financial commitments by objective in 1995 were as follows:

<u>Objective</u>	<u>million ECU</u>
1	14,518
2	1,735
3	1,607
4	94.5
5a	834.9
5b	571.9
6	125.9

The current programming period comes to an end in 1999 and therefore considerable attention is being given at the moment to the changes which will be made to both the main objectives and the associated Community Instruments.

**The Redesign of the Structural Funds**

One of the first indications of the approach the European Commission is likely to take in redesigning the Structural Funds was given by Social Affairs Commissioner, Pdraig Flynn, in a speech to a ESF Seminar in march 1997. In his speech, he called for a much simpler overall structure for the funds and a new partnership with, and within, the Member States. Whilst advocating a much simpler structure, Mr Flynn dismissed the idea of a "single" fund as a



simplistic answer to a complex question. He proposed instead that the current seven objectives be reduced to just two:

- a geographical dimension focusing both on regions with lower GDP and areas with special problems of industrial adaptation and rural development;
- a horizontal human resource development function which would operate across the EU as a whole.

On the subject of the Community initiatives, Mr Flynn criticised the present system on the basis that there were too many initiatives and that they were administratively complex. The next generation of initiatives should concentrate on a few priority themes only, he said, and gave as examples of themes one relating to equal opportunities and human resource development, a second with a territorial character and a third focusing on inter-regional co-operation.

On the subject of partnership, Pdraig Flynn said that he believed that the Commission was too much involved in the detailed implementation of the funds. He felt that in future, the focus should be on agreeing overall policy frameworks with each Member State and leaving the implementation of the programmes to those involved in the partnership arrangements within the Member State itself.

In October 1997, the European Parliament Committee on Employment and Social Affairs adopted a Report, prepared by Karin Jons MEP, on the reform of the European Social Fund. The Report recommended a drastic reduction in the objectives of the Structural Funds and the Community initiatives. It suggests that Objectives 3 and 4 should be combined into a single horizontal objective, and that only one Community initiative should be retained for human resources support, namely the one that promotes equality and opportunity between men and women.

On the other hand, the Report stressed the need to retain the current measures under Objective 3, which provide support to the young and long-term unemployed, women, the disabled and the socially excluded. The Committee presented a long list of measures, where Social Fund interventions should be strengthened. These included:

- the promotion of local employment initiatives,
- support for the development of new ways of organising working time,
- the development of vocational training,
- the promotion of the mainstreaming of Social Fund initiatives.

In all cases, the Report said, social partners should be involved in negotiating the intervention framework between the Commission and the authorities of the Member States.

The theme of reforming the Structural Funds (and in particular the European Social Fund) was taken up again by Commissioner Flynn in a speech in November 1997. He spoke particularly about Objective 3, reminding his audience of the four key areas of activity identified for the objective, these being:

1. Active labour market policies to fight unemployment
2. Combating social exclusion
3. Lifelong education and training systems to promote employability, and
4. Accompanying economic and social change

He perhaps gave some indication of the way Commission thinking was developing when he said: "I particularly favour what I call "social risk capital" schemes whereby locally-based organisations with social aims can gain access ESF funding simply and quickly. They would be modest sums, but even small grants can encourage and sustain imaginative local ventures. I have seen this work well in several Member States. We have experimented with this idea in the special PEACE Initiative in Northern Ireland. The results have been excellent. Even when tension was at its highest, and communications between the opposing traditions were virtually at a standstill, the co-operation of their representatives in working together to make a success of their own local projects was remarkable and inspiring". In terms of Community initiatives, he said that he remained convinced that they had a valuable role to play but suggested that there was need for a significant reduction in the overall number of initiatives.

### **The Future Challenges**

The Structural Funds face a number of challenges which the new 2000-2006 programming period must attempt to deal with. These include:

- EU enlargement will pose perhaps the largest single challenge, bringing, as it will, countries into EU membership where the economies are much less well developed than in the existing Union. The Structural Funds will have a vital role to play in helping the countries of Central and Eastern Europe meet the economic challenges of EU membership.
- Making regional and structural development a real partnership process is another of the challenges facing the Structural Funds in the coming years, particularly ensuring the full participation of the social partners in the planning and implementation stages of programmes.



## NEWS FROM EUROPE

### European Parliament Calls For Ratification Of Amsterdam Treaty

The November Plenary Session of the European Parliament saw the adoption of a Resolution recommending that Member States ratify the draft Treaty of Amsterdam. The Resolution, adopted with 348 votes in favour, 101 against and with 34 abstentions, was critical of many aspects of the Treaty but still supported its ratification by Member States.

In particular, the Resolution:

- "Regrets the absence from the Amsterdam Treaty of the institutional reforms needed for the effective and democratic functioning of an enlarged union and affirms that these reforms should be completed before enlargement".
- Calls on the European Council to "affirm that no new Member States will be admitted before the completion of the institutional reform necessary for the proper functioning of an enlarged union".
- Calls on the UK, Danish and Irish governments to take part at the earliest opportunity in the plans to bring the Schengen system for free movement and abolition of passport controls under the EU umbrella.
- Takes the view that insufficient progress was made at Amsterdam in developing a common defence policy.
- Calls for the co-decision procedure to be extended to agricultural, fisheries and tax legislation as well as competition policy, structural policy, tourism and water resources.
- Calls for adjustments to be made in the weighting or value of votes in Council and the number of Commissioners per member state. Qualified majority voting should be the norm.

### Commission Communication on the Construction Industry

The construction industry is the largest industrial sector in the EU. It has a gross output of 750 billion ECU which represents some 11% of EU GDP and 5.6% of value added. It is also the largest sector in employment terms, providing jobs for 8.8 million people - 7% of the EU working population. If the number of jobs in associated sectors such as

construction products and other service sectors are taken into account, it is claimed that more than 26 million workers in the EU depend directly or indirectly on the construction sector.

Despite the size and importance of the sector, output has been stagnant since the early nineties. Productivity in the industry has lagged significantly behind other sectors. Such factors are behind the publication of a new Communication by the European Commission on the competitiveness of the European construction industry. The Communication identifies four strategic objectives aimed at enhancing the competitiveness of the sector:

- To develop a coherent quality policy for the sector: the Commission recommends the widespread adoption of quality schemes and a proactive approach to achieve environmental objectives.
- To improve the regulatory environment: The Commission pledges to act to consolidate and simplify legislation related to the Single Market and public procurement in order to create a "favourable and transparent framework for competitiveness".
- To improve provision of education and training: Chronic lack of investment in education and training for the workforce has been found right across the sector says the Commission.
- To re-orient and reinforce research and development: The Commission proposes measures to re-orient resources towards the real and continually changing needs of the sector.

### Training For European Works Councils

The European Trade Union College (ETUCO) is calling for all European Works Councils to make training a priority when drawing up Works Council Agreements. This follows a recent study which revealed that, of 427 voluntary agreements reached to date, only 60 contained a clause on training. The report also expresses concern about European Commission plans for drastic cuts in the future funding available for the training of Works Councils. Such cuts, they fear, may impede the successful functioning of Works Councils in the future.

The ETUCO along with the Association for European Training of workers on the Impact of New Technologies (AFETT) have been designing training courses for European Works Councils since 1993. Together, the two organisations have a network of over 100 skilled trainers throughout the whole of Europe. A wide



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variety of languages and specific issues can therefore be incorporated into the courses they design. Within the courses, traditional presentations have largely been replaced by simulation situations, case studies and group activities. The ETUCO/EFETT courses can be tailor-made to meet the needs of specific European Works Councils where necessary.

Further information about these courses can be obtained from:

Jean-Claude Le Douaron, EWC Training Officer  
ETUCO/AFETT. Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 155,  
B-1210 Brussels, Belgium  
Tel 00 32 2 224 05 30 Fax: 00 32 2 224 05 33  
email : etue@pophost.eunet.be

### Commission Propose Social Incentives In Trade Deals

The European Commission has adopted a proposal for the introduction of new social and environmental policy incentive arrangements in relation to the System of Generalised Preferences (GSP) which gives preferential access to EU markets for non-EU countries. Under the proposed Council Regulation, additional preferences would be granted on request to GSP beneficiaries who can show that they have adopted and are effectively applying the international labour protection standards established by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and environmental protection standards established by the International Tropical Timber Organisation (ITTO). The Commission states that its aim is to encourage beneficiary countries to make real improvements in their social and environmental policies.

To ensure that these special incentive arrangements operate effectively, the proposal for a Regulation lays down methods of monitoring their application. Countries wishing to benefit from the incentive clauses would have to make a formal request and provide the Commission with detailed information on relevant legislation, its implementation and the results obtained.

The Commission could require the requesting countries to provide any further information it needed to appraise the requests. In the course of that appraisal the Commission would also reserve the right to visit the country in question and consult any person or organisation likely to help it in its research.

### European Week Of Health and Safety at Work

The second European Week of Health and Safety at Work took place between the 20th and 25th of October 1997. The focus of the Week was on the assessment of workplace risks with particular emphasis on small and medium-sized enterprises. The EU has been active in this field, adopting directives laying down minimum standards for each activity or area in which risks exist. The principal objective of the current campaign is to reinforce the efforts to reduce risks and improve the quality of life at work by:

- making employees and employers more aware of hazards at the workplace;
- encouraging effective safety and health management in companies;
- promoting measures designed to solve specific problems and reduce risks;
- promoting all EU measures in this field.

Speaking at the launch of the European Week, Employment and Social Affairs Commissioner, Pdraig Flynn, said, "There are over 6,000 deaths each year in the European Union from work-related accidents and injuries. This is an unacceptable price to pay in human terms. Hundreds of thousands of cases of serious injury leading to permanent disability. This is not the result of bad luck or freak circumstances. It is the result of carelessness, negligence, bad management and incompetence. We have already done much to achieve safer, healthier conditions at work but these figures tell us that we could do much, much more."

As part of the current campaign, the European Commission is co-financing 34 projects selected by the Member States. Posters and information brochures are available. All these projects have a common goal, namely to show that, if the necessary protective and preventive measures relating to health and safety at work are to be taken, risk assessment constitutes a suitable starting point.

### New EU Forecast Confirms Economic Recovery

The European Commission's Autumn Economic Forecast shows economic growth in the EU gathering speed and brings strong confirmation of the general economic recovery. Economic growth is forecast to strengthen from 1.8% in 1996, to 2.6% in the current year and 3.0% in 1998. This represents an upward



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revision of 0.2% in GDP growth in 1997 and 1998 on the Commission's Spring Economic Forecast. The Commission also reports that Member States are making good progress with economic convergence - a prerequisite for participation in the single currency. This confirms the Commission's view that a majority of Member States should be capable of meeting the necessary conditions to participate in the single currency from the 1st January 1999.

The forecasts also indicate considerable improvements in the employment situation. EU employment is forecast to grow by ½% this year rising to ¾% next year and 1¼% in 1999. This corresponds to the net creation of 700,000 jobs in 1997, about 1.3 million in 1998 and about 1.8 million in 1999, adding up to the total of 3.8 million over the three years. Positive employment growth is expected in all Member States, except Germany and Sweden, from 1997 onwards and throughout the EU from 1998. Taking into account the growth of the labour force, the creation of jobs does not lead to an equal reduction in unemployment. From a peak of just under 11% in 1996, the average unemployment rate in the EU is expected to fall to 10.7% this year, to 10.3% next year and to 9.7% in 1999. At the country level, all Member States will experience falling unemployment rates over the forecast horizon.

### Industrial Relations in the New Market Economies

The excellent series of ETUI reports under the Transfer: European Review of Labour and Research heading continues with the latest edition focusing on industrial relations in the new market economies of Central and Eastern Europe. Articles in the new issue include:

- Transformation process and trade union configurations in Poland and Hungary.
- Trade unions, foreign Direct investment and the restructuring of Polish state-owned enterprises.
- Workers' attitudes in the Czech Republic : Results of the IVVM survey two years on.
- Trade Unions in Romania.
- The role of multi-employer collective agreements in regulating terms and conditions of employment in Hungary.
- The problems of reconstituting a union recognised state enterprise: an exploration of aspects of

Hungary's shop floor industrial relations.

- Trade unions, industrial relations and the State in Russia.
- Institutional transfer and the transformation of labour relations in east Germany : lessons for central and eastern Europe?

As usual, each article includes a short summary which is also available in French and German, although the main articles are only available in English. The annual subscription to Transfer is BF1,200 (for four issues) and individual issues can be obtained from the ETUI (Fax 00 32 2 224 0513) at BF400 each.

### Extending EU Social Legislation to the United Kingdom

The first drafts of the two proposed Directives which will extend the provisions of the two Directives adopted under the Maastricht Social Policy Agreement arrangements to the UK have been published. The two Directives affected are:

1. Directive 94/45/EC on the establishment of European Works Councils in Community-scale undertakings for the purpose of informing and consulting workers, and
2. Directive 96/34/EC on the Framework Agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC.

Both drafts are relatively short and merely extend the provisions of the existing Directives to the UK. An additional article in the proposal on the European Works Council Directive increases the maximum number of employee representatives on the "special negotiating body" from 17 to 18. The figure of 17 corresponded to the 14 Member States who were originally subject to the Directive plus the three EEA States which were also a party to the Directive. Thus, the increase to 18 reflects the fact that the UK will now be subject to the Directive.

In both cases the legal base for the new proposals is Article 100 of the Treaty (measures necessary for the functioning of the Single Market). The final implementation date for both Directives will be two years after the date of adoption. This is potentially important as far as the European Works Council Directive is concerned because that date will become the deadline for any voluntary agreements under Article 3 of the original Directive.



## NOTICE BOARD

### New Publications:

#### **Social Protection in Europe : Facing Up to Changes and Challenges.**

Ed. by Alessandro Bosco and Martin Hutsebaut  
Published by ETUI. English 452pp BEF 800.

*This new book presents the detailed results of the joint ETUC/ETUI conference held in Brussels in November 1996 which examined the future of social protection systems in Europe. It looks at current problems facing social protection systems and future perspectives. Three key sections concentrate on pension systems, unemployment benefit systems and health care systems.*

#### **Meeting the Challenge of Change at Work : ESF Project Examples**

European Commission (DGV) 58pp ECU 15

*In 1993, the European Commission introduced a new Structural Fund objective (Objective 4) devoted to helping the adaption of the workforce to industrial change and change in production systems. The Commission have now published a pamphlet which looks at what has so far been achieved by Object 4 projects - and projects under the Adapt Community Initiative - in Member States. Based primarily on case studies, the pamphlet provides a useful overview of the differing ways of helping to prepare workers for change at work.*

#### **Trade Unions and Transnational Projects : A Guide To Managing European Training Projects.**

European Trade Union College. 100pp

*This extremely useful guide is intended for trade union officials involved in education and training, especially those who are involved in - or wanting to be involved in - the co-ordination of transnational projects. It looks at the benefits available from transnational projects and the skills necessary in formulating and successfully running projects. Both project management tasks and budget management are fully explored and a variety of appendices provide details of key funding projects.*

*Further details of the publication can be obtained from the European Trade Union College, Boulevard Emile Jacqmain 155, B-1210 Brussels, Belgium.  
Fax: 00 32 2 224 05 33.*

### Internet and WWW Review

The amount of material available on the World Wide Web (WWW) of interest to European trade unionists continues to expand. Here are some new sites which may be of interest to readers.

#### **Irish Congress of Trade Unions**

Language: English

Address: <http://www.iol.ie/ictu/>

*The site contains full details of the organisation and activities of the ICTU. Full details of recent press release and publications are also available.*

#### **Info regio**

Language: English

Address: <http://www.info regio.org/dg16>

*The info regio site concentrates on news and developments in relation to the European Regional Development Fund and Cohesion Fund. Sections deal with the latest news, details of the various funds and documents produced by DGXVI of the European Commission.*

#### **Committee of the Regions**

Language: English, French, German

Address: <http://www.cor.eu.int/>

*The Committee of the Regions recently launched a new and expanded WWW site. It gives an overview of the work of the Committee, details of Committee members and provides access to the full texts of all Committee Opinions and documents. Committee press releases are also available and there is a search engine to help you find the exact documents you may be interested in.*

#### **Employment Summit**

Languages: English, French, German

Address: <http://europa.eu.int/en/comm/dg05/elm/summit/>

*The European Commission have opened a special site dealing with the November 1997 Special Employment Summit meeting. The site includes details of the background to the summit, key documents and a forum to enable users to exchange comments on the work of the Summit.*

#### **Eurydice**

Languages: English

Address: <http://www.eurydice.org/>

*The site of the information network on education in Europe which includes the Community database on educational systems.*

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