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IN BRIEF

Union membership in decline in the European Union

Jelle Visser, Professor at the University of Amsterdam, recently issued his analysis of "adjusted" union membership data in 24 countries in an American review, the *Monthly Labor Review*.

Comparing union membership data implies some difficulties since countries do not report their systems the same way. A combined analysis of unionisation in 12 Member States (EU15 except Portugal, Greece and Luxembourg) reports that union membership increased by 6.8% between 1970 and 2003. However, this increase is only due to the first decade examined.

Mr. Visser also asserts that the position of unions may actually be weaker than what appears through membership data only: he takes into consideration other criteria like bargaining coverage, election results, relations with legislator and public opinion. These criteria constitute with membership rates the density level of unions. If we take into consideration the density level, unions in the 12 European countries examined lost 11.5% of their presence between 1970 and 2003.

The report also stress the composition of unions' members: generally, unions consist in older members and tend to decline among younger workers. On the other hand, union rates among women have risen in some countries, due to the increase of female employment rates (especially in the public sector) and to the adoption of equal opportunities policies.

Finally, some factors contributing to the unions' decline are highlighted by the report: increasing globalisation, rise of service sector employment, privatisation and slower growth rates, higher rates of long-term unemployment, more flexible employment contracts and lower inflation policies combined with tighter monetary policies.

More info: www.bls.gov/opub/mlr/2006/01/art3abs.htm (*Monthly Labor Review*)

<http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int/2006/03/articles/eu0603029i.html> (EIRO Communiqué)

Employment Week: the Danish flexicurity model in debate

The Employment Week took place from 16th to 18th of May in Brussels and attracted over 800 European decision-makers and practitioners from EU institutions, international companies (Air France, Manpower, Microsoft), and NGOs (European Youth Forum, AGE).

During the debates, the possibility to transpose the Danish flexicurity model to other Member States was examined. Indeed, many studies try to determine the characters of the Nordic social model, which reveals successful in terms of social security and adaptability.

Ronald Janssen from the ETUC considers that the choice made in the Nordic countries to invest in a "skilled workforce" could be an example for other Member States, but that the Nordic social model cannot just be transposed.

John Philpott (Charter Institute of Personnel and Development) stressed the need for more participation of the civil society and social partners, important in the Nordic model, in European decision-making processes.

More info: <http://www.employmentweek.com/>

Green Week and Climate Change Campaign

On 30th of May, the European Commission launched the Green week dedicated to biodiversity. The Green week preceded the World Environment Day on 5 June.

During the conferences and events that marked this week, the objective displayed was to "address the economic, social and environmental dimensions of biodiversity loss" i.e. the wealth of species, "and how to reverse it".

This event took place just as the Commission tries to develop awareness around climate change. Thus, on 29th of May, President Barroso and Commissioner Dimas in charge of environment launched the campaign "You control climate change".

More info: www.europa.eu

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EUROPEAN AFFAIRS WHEN WILL THE PERIOD OF REFLEXION END?



After the French and Dutch rejections of the EU Constitutional Treaty in May 2005, the institutions launched a "period of reflection" to set up the future of the Constitution and of the European Union.

According to the Communication issued by the Commission in October 2005, an overall assessment of national debates had to be led in June 2006. Thus, the Commission published a new Communication sent to Member States on 15th June. The Agenda set up is designed to bring citizens the results they expect from Europe, mostly concerning unemployment, better ac-

cess to their rights, more security coordination, and the achievement of the internal market.

The Communication's recommendations were discussed during the European Council on 15th and 16th June. European leaders decided to extend the period of reflection until 2008. Then, a new treaty (or constitution) will be elaborated, and institutional changes will be carried out.

Press commentators widely pointed out the indecision of EU leaders. The constitutional crisis clearly seems deeper than had been admitted.

Poul Nyrup Rasmussen, President of the European Socialist

Party, declared that Mr. Barroso was in charge of finding a solution to the "constitutional impasse" and that the period of reflection "should not turn into an extended siesta".

Gaëtane Ricard-Nihoul from Notre Europe, think tank led by Jacques Delors, proposes 6 orientations to end up the crisis: more democracy and politics, going on with the Constitution's ratifications, a new Convention on Part III, and a ratification *via* referendum.

More info: http://ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/president/pdf/com_2006_212_en.pdf

www.notre-europe.asso.fr

THE
DEVELOPMENT OF
SOCIAL EUROPE
IS THE ONLY
POSSIBLE
ANSWER TO THE
PRESSURE
EXERTED BY
GLOBALISATION
ON SOCIAL
RIGHTS AND
DIVERSITY

DEVELOPING SOCIAL EUROPE, PRESERVING THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL MODEL

The Brussels think tank Notre Europe, led by Jacques Delors, just issued the report of the Workshop held on 9 March at the European Economic and Social Committee, entitled « The European social model(s) : which directions and responsibilities for the EU? ».

The purpose was to contribute to the search for a better balance between economic growth and social needs. More precisely, the workshop aimed at defining orientations for the European policy in order to modernize the European social model.

François Martou, Professor at

the University of Louvain, called for more cooperation in the field of economic objectives and budget. Daniel Vaughan-Whitehead from the International Labour Organisation gives priority to employment, mostly through a revitalization of the social dialogue.

In order to ensure the preservation of the European social dimension threatened by globalisation, speakers identified several strategies: a better transition between education and the labour market, the development of flexicurity, fiscal coordination, the strengthening of the European Employment policy, the

achievement of Political Europe, reforms of national social models (particularly thanks to social partners' involvement), and finally the enhancement of Europe's role as a counter power in the international sphere.

The workshop concludes that there is an absolute and pressing need for the development of Social Europe, which is the only possible answer to the pressure exerted by globalisation on social rights and diversity. Politics must mark time to economics.

Plus d'infos: www.notre-europe.asso.fr

EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT: THE ENERGY ISSUE

European and Russian leaders met in Sochi (Italy) on 25th May. A new frame for cooperation and partnership was under consideration.

Following the creation of the four common spaces (economic, freedom/security/justice, external security, research/education), both the EU and Russia wanted to deepen their strategic relations.

Yet, energy constitutes an essential element of the negotiations: Russia is a capital source of importations for Europe (25% of gas con-

sumption). During the Summit on 25th May, Vladimir Putin tried to reassure European leaders about the energetic partnership, in compensation for an easier access to the European market for Russian companies.

Indeed, since the beginning of 2006, the EU is worried by the Russian position regarding the access to gas by Ukraine and Eastern countries, which increases European energetic dependence.

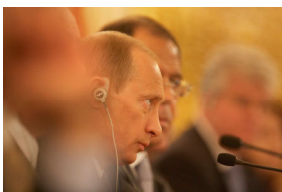
Yet, on 25th May, the Russian Minister for Natural resources threatened to impose more

State control on three energetic foreign investments projects. It concerns petrol extraction projects in the Eastern Russia, devolved to private companies, and which may thus be nationalised.

This "clash" seems to encourage Member States once more towards a genuine external energy policy.

More info: www.euractiv.com (heading « Energy »)

www.cer.org.uk/pdf/briefing_eu_russia.pdf (Centre for European Reform)



FLEXIBILISATION OF WORKING HOURS: THE PANACEA FOR THE WORK/LIFE BALANCE?

SOCIAL AGENDA

On 17th May, the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions issued a study on working time and work/life balance. It involves 21.000 European companies in the 15 « old » Member States and 6 new Member countries.

The study deals with flexible working hours, overtime, part-time work, non-standard working hours, family-related leave and leave of absence, phased and early retirement and work/life balance.

The survey includes several interviews of employee representatives and pays great attention to their work regarding the defence of employees' rights and the negotiation of working hours.

Companies from Latvia, Sweden, Finland, and the United Kingdom show the highest proportion of flexible working time arrangements in Europe. Lowest rates can be found in Cyprus, Greece, Portugal, and Hungary.

On average, one European company in two proposes flexible working hours to its employees (companies with 10 employees or more).

Flexibility mostly regards starting and finishing times of the working day (16% of enterprises). 13% offer the possibility to compensate for credit hours by longer periods off work.

The survey insists on the connections between the Lisbon Strategy and the development of more flexible working conditions. It reveals the positive consequences of flexible working hours on employment rates and on the attractiveness of the labour market.

Nevertheless, we must stress that such a benefit is genuine only if flexible working hours arrangements are agreed by employees. Part-time work is still largely imposed by employers, not chosen by employees. We can regret that the study only takes into consideration flexible working hours arrangements chosen by the employees.

However, the survey reveals that the increase of part-time work sometimes provokes a reducing of social rights (social provisions, minimum wage). The flexibilisation of working hours thus implies risks for employees.

Besides, the study analyses the results of questionnaires sent to managers. They reveal that the job satisfaction increases among employees of companies practicing flexible hours, and that the workload is better spread. They also report less absenteeism and overtime.

Employee representatives confirm these trends. They also show a clear preference for the flexibilisation of working time in order to improve the balance between working life and private life.

We may regret that the survey does not contain any statistical data about imposed working time flexibilisation and its consequences within companies. The study is clearly optimistic, and mostly seeks to highlight the benefits of flexible working conditions on the achievement of the Lisbon objective, create more and better jobs.

More info: www.eurofound.eu.int/pubdocs/2006/27/en/1/ef0627en.pdf



SATISFACTION
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THE COMMISSION PROMOTES « DECENT WORK FOR ALL »

The Commission acts to promote decent work and fair globalisation in a recently issued communication. Two main issues are at stake: helping developing countries to fight against poverty and improving working and living conditions in developed countries.

"Better economic growth is no guarantee of better jobs or less poverty" recalled Vladimir Špidla, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Commissioner. The promotion of decent work, according to the paper, can be achieved through the promotion of job creation, improved govern-

ance and social dialogue, better cooperation between the main stakeholders, and a reduced corruption.

The Commission will set up means of measuring and addressing decent work, strengthening the contribution of decent work in EU development policy and external aid, and enhancing cooperation with regional and interregional organisations.

Decent work will also be a part of the European Neighbourhood policy and of the agreements concluded with candidate countries. It will become a transversal

objective of all EU trade policies.

This initiative follows the declaration last September from the United Nations that fair globalisation and decent work for all had to be fundamental objectives in national and international development policies and strategies.

The Commission will issue an outline of progress achieved in the area of decent work by the summer 2008.

More info: http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2006/may/com_2006_249_en.pdf



STUDY OF THE LABOUR SCIENCE INSTITUTE: PROFESSIONAL RELATIONS IN THE CHEMISTRY SECTOR

The Labour Science Institute of the Catholic University of Louvain (UCL) just issued the results of the survey « Representativeness of the social partner organisations in the chemical industry », conducted on behalf of the Employment and Social Affairs Directorate-General of the European Commission. The study is based on a network of national experts present in the 25 EU Member States and pays also great attention to the situation of professional relations in the chemical sector in candidate countries. The purpose is to achieve « brief descriptions of the way that social dialogue functions in the countries concerned, and descriptions of the various workers' and employers' organisations involved in social dialogue at sector level ».

The study begins with a description of the industry (weight in economy, in employment...) and mentions the creation of a European Social Dialogue Committee in the sector, in December 2004, with a presentation of the founder organisations: the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers' Federation (EMCEF), member of the ETUC, and the European Chemical Employers Group (CECG), member of the European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC).

Then, the study introduces national organisations, with their membership to a European federation (particularly FECCIA and EMCEF) when it occurs. Member organisations of FECCIA (European Federation of Managers in the Chemical and Allied Industries) are mentioned. Thus, the survey gives an overview of the functioning of social dialogue in the chemical sector, both at the European and the national levels.

More info: <http://www.uclouvain.be/en-11476.html> (summary of 31 pages, complete study of 245 pages)

ACEO (GREECE) - 17TH ANNUAL CONFERENCE ON LEADERSHIP AND NEW BoD

The 17th Annual Conference of the Association of Chief Executive Officers (ACEO) on Leadership, which took place in Athens last May, was deemed a huge success by its participants. The Deputy Minister of Development Mr. **Yannis Papathanasiou** welcomed the attendants and delivered a short speech.

The conference's keynote speakers are prominent figures in their respective fields: renowned management guru Dr. Tom Peters, Emotional Intelligence expert Prof. Richard Boyatzis, and widely acclaimed football referee Pierluigi Collina elaborated on the characteristics a successful leader should possess. Also, top Greek scholars Ch. Tsoukas and S. Makrydakis, P. Athanasopoulos Executive Vice President of Toyota Motor Europe and entrepreneur D. Katsachnias, talked about their personal experiences with regard to Leadership issues. The conference was attended by chief executives, academics and businessmen, whose participation surpassed that of previous years and contributed towards its great success.



Left to right: M. Pagidas, R. Boyatzis, T. Peters, P. Collina, J. Anastasopoulos

On March 7th 2006, ACEO had elected its new Board of Directors for 2006-2008 with the conclusion of the General Assembly. The first session of the BoD appointed Michael Pagidas of S.C. Johnson Chairman of the BoD for the fifth consecutive term, Dimitris Kyriakopoulos (Viohalco Group) Vice-Chairman, Nikitas Konstantellos (KPMG) Secretary General and Litsa Panayotopoulos (OTE Academy) Treasurer. The new BoD comprises the following members: Chris Amiralis, Hay Group, Nikos Stellakis, Chipita International and Konstantinos Machairas, AB Vassilopoulos.

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CCP (SPAIN) - PROGRAMME FOR THE PREVENTION OF LABOUR RISKS

The protection and improvement of the working conditions of the Managerial Staff and Professionals (MS&P) is one of the main objectives of the Confederation of Managers and Professionals of Spain (CCP). For this reason CCP has subscribed with "Mutual Universal" an Agreement for the elaboration of a project called "Program for the integration of the prevention of the labour risks within the functions of ordinary management of managers and professionals".

The MS&P must be aware of their role in the prevention of the labour risks, that is why it important that they receive a suitable formation and learning, as well as updates of this knowledge integrated within the preventive activity that the MS&P hold.

The project, once having evaluated the qualifications to carry out the integration of the prevention, aims at the preparation of a Web site for the materials, and the preparation of training programmes, or of complementary training or reinforcement. Finally, the Program will be spread to third parties, members and partners or not members of the participating organisations. CCP contributes to the Program with the knowledge of the surroundings where the MS&P develop their functions for the identification of the preventive actions to develop. At the same time, the CCP is committed, with Mutual Universal, to collaborate to obtain subventions and aids to the project by means of the mechanisms established for financing projects of investigation in prevention of labour risks.

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ABOUT CEC

The CEC unites 1 million executives and professionals in Europe organised into national federations and European branch federations. Since the end of the 1980s, the CEC contributes, as a social partner, to the European social dialogue. The CEC has made the task of defending the managers' specific interests its own, while maintaining dialogue with other parties.

Indeed, the CEC participated to several consultations (for instance, about the Green Paper "Demographic Change") and negotiated several framework agreements with European social partners (agreements on "Stress at work", 27 May 2004, on "Gender equality", March 2005).

The CEC promotes a European integration clearly in favour of the principle of performance and competition, but also the social market economy and a value-oriented way of conducting business, since the respect of social obligations is an added value for economy in the long run.

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