



Group 2 Newsletter



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Electronic information bulletin of the Workers Group

EDITORIAL

The real Europe

Unfortunately, we do not always see eye-to-eye with the European Commission on its proposals: all too often, they include elements that we are fighting against and do not include elements that should be there.

The real interest of the European Union is totally and exclusively synonymous with the interest of men and women. We must not imagine the EU as being designed by and for economies, institutions, abstract concepts,

systems, structures and things. It must be seen to be designed by and for people, that is, by and for the general public: the famous "civil society" in which the majority of people are workers.

A good idea...

We must therefore be glad when the Commission does make a move in the right direction.

Gross domestic product is currently the omnipresent statistical instrument, used to measure the condition of Europe and take decisions. The proposal to add indicators which take more account of the social and environmental dimensions is not new: we have been calling for this for a long time. We must therefore applaud the recent [Commission communication](#) which acknowledges that GDP "cannot be relied upon to inform policy debates on all issues" and that "critically, GDP does not measure environmental sustainability or social inclusion", before proposing five measures "to better measure progress in a changing world".

The Commission is right to point out that we must "seek to protect the hardest hit and the most vulnerable in society" and assess living conditions more accurately: social cohesion, access to basic goods and services at affordable

prices, education, healthcare, air quality, poverty, etc.

The Commission is right to try to measure various aspects of the social and environmental spheres. It has noted, quite correctly, that there is a "link between social exclusion and environmental deprivation".

...that needs to be put into practice

The Commission believes that its work "could contribute to setting new strategic goals for the post-2010 Lisbon Strategy". We will monitor this closely, since the primary goal is to ensure that these new evaluation mechanisms do not remain mere mathematical exercises for Eurostat statisticians: they must be quoted in every text and referred to constantly, so that the decisions taken have a genuine environmental dimension as well as a truly social one.

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George Dassis

President of the workers' group

1 July 2009: extraordinary group meeting

Older workers – work and retirement



From left to right: Antoine Cochet, head of secretariat; George Dassis, president; and Henri Lourdelle, author of the presentation

The need for global policies to master diverse situations...



Europe's workers must share information, support each other and have an increasing say in the management of what concerns them directly

The extraordinary meeting of Group II held at the headquarters of the EESC on Wednesday 1 July 2009 addressed the issue of "Older workers - work and retirement", introduced with a presentation by Henri Lourdelle, adviser on social protection to the secretariat-general of the [European Trade Union Confederation \(ETUC\)](#).

Presentation

After mentioning the EESC own-initiative opinion "[The situation of ageing workers faced with industrial change – providing support and managing age diversity in sectors and companies](#)" (rapporteur: [Marian Krzaklewski, member of Group II](#)), Henri Lourdelle talked more generally about the issue of age management in companies and the broader labour market. He managed to examine, in the very short time available, all the key parameters of this issue which is of major importance for society in general, and especially for workers: premature exclusion from the labour market; early retirement; the diversity of the situations faced; the link between retirement and the demanding nature or attractiveness of work; the financing of pensions; the benefits and drawbacks of government and private social protection systems which are based either on solidarity mechanisms between contributors or a form of retirement saving scheme; the importance of social dialogue, the ability of businesses to adapt, and global policies that take into account the diversity of the situations being faced...

The debate

Members' comments confirmed the need to consider carefully all the above-mentioned factors, and to avoid any type of crude generalisation: trade unions might find themselves working to prevent early retirement imposed unfairly on employees, while at the same time having to ensure that older workers were not forced to remain in work when they had reached the age where they had the right to enjoy a well-deserved retirement. The debate highlighted the social and "technical" diversity of national systems and situations, and thus the need that everybody felt to explain each situation clearly to employees' representatives from other countries and to be informed about what was happening elsewhere. Europe's workers must therefore share information and support each other. They must have an increasing say in the management of a problem which ultimately concerns them directly, both collectively and as individuals.

Read more: http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp?id=3003GR02EN

Press releases and statements

In the month of July, following its extraordinary meeting, the Employee's Group of the European Economic and Social Committee published two declarations, as well as a press release, concerning the Working Time Directive.

Working Time Directive: no deterioration in working conditions

The Employees Group addressed its comments primarily to the new Members of the European Parliament, and called upon MEPs to continue playing a central role vis-à-vis proposed legislation “that represented and could still represent a risk and threat to workers' and European citizens' rights and health”.

The Employees Group went on to say that it was “currently particularly concerned about the Commission's repeated attempts to relaunch a new consultation on a revised version of the Working Time Directive, with two

hidden objectives: to deregulate working time and to weaken collective bargaining”.

The members of the Employees Group of the European Economic and Social Committee “pledge to work and collaborate with the members of the European Parliament to ensure that economic growth and development, full employment and the European social model are objectives and tools that serve cohesion and the well-being of all citizens.

[\[Read the press release\]](#)

Support for Turkey's KESK confederation concerning the imprisoned trade union members

[\[Read the statement\]](#)

Protest against the coup d'état in Honduras

[\[Read the statement\]](#)

http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp?id=010GR02EN

[Communiqué]



ETUI Monthly Forum

This month: in co-operation with the Centre de recherche et d'information socio-politiques (CRISP)

Mieux légiférer : état des lieux et perspectives

Speaker : Éric van den Abeele, Professor at the University of Mons Hainaut (UMH) and Research Associate at the OSE

Moderator : Philippe Pochet, General Director, ETUI

Date : 30 September 2009, de 11 h 30 à 13 h 30

Venue: International Trade Union House
First floor, Room C
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5
B-1210, Brussels

Languages: This month the Forum's presentation will be in French. There will be the possibility to ask questions in English.

Resources:

[L'Agenda «mieux légiférer» de l'Union Européenne, by Éric van den Abeele](#)

Briefing: [\[Read the text \(in French\)\]](#)

Registration : in order to take part in this event, just register by e-mail to Tristan Macdonald, Communications Officer, ETUI: tmacdonald@etui.org

455th EESC plenary session (15 and 16 July 2009)

Adopted opinions

The opinions adopted on 15 and 16 July 2009 include four own-initiative opinions presented by Group II rapporteurs. All the opinions presented by Group II rapporteurs were adopted.

Guests of the Committee

At its plenary session of 15 and 16 July the Committee was pleased to welcome:

- [Sven Otto Littorin](#), Swedish Minister for Employment, on behalf of the [Presidency-in-Office of the Council](#),
- [Joe Borg](#), European Commissioner for [Fisheries and Maritime Affairs](#),
- Antonio **Marzano**, President of [IAESCSI](#), and [János Tóth](#), EESC member, president of the TEN section and outgoing president of IAESCSI.

Several Group II members took the floor to respond to the speakers. In response to Mr Littorin's address concerning the intentions of the Swedish presidency, [Georges Dassis, president of group II](#), noted that while those intentions were very laudable, they had yet to be translated into concrete action.

[Leila Kurki](#), president of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, welcomed the Swedish presidency's manifest sympathy for the plight of workers affected by the economic crisis, but she pointed out that the social effects of the crisis were only just starting to be felt. She listed a range of measures that needed to be taken urgently, especially in order to avoid exclusion and to protect the weakest in society.

[Lars Nyberg](#) underlined that the depth of the crisis, which had been difficult to gauge at the outset, justified a revision of the recovery plan. He also referred to specific directives requiring particular attention. He also mentioned certain specific directives requiring particular attention.

http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp?id=4004GR02EN



EUROPEAN ECONOMIC
AND SOCIAL COMMITTEE

GROUP II
(EMPLOYEES)

99 RUE BELLIARD
OFFICE JDE 7127
B-1040 BRUSSELS
TEL. + 32 2 546.87.83

GR2@EESC.EUROPA.EU

[http://eesc.europa.eu/
groups/2/index_en.asp](http://eesc.europa.eu/groups/2/index_en.asp)

EDITORS:

ANTOINE COCHET
DENIS LIÉGEOIS

MANAGING EDITOR:
GEORGES DASSIS

New member officially joins Group II

At the plenary session of 15 and 16 July, the assembly officially accepted [Dörthe Weimann](#) (United Kingdom), research officer, [UCATT](#) (*Union of Construction, Allied Trades and Technicians*).

We are delighted to welcome her to the Employees Group. We wish her an enriching and fruitful term of office.

