

communiqué



European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Issue 1, January 2006

DIRECTOR'S DIARY

During 2006, the Foundation will bring its research findings and analysis on employment creation, industrial restructuring, worker mobility, and work-life balance to debates and social policymakers across the European Union. As outlined in its comprehensive programme of work for 2006, it will also present the results of the 2005 European Working Conditions Survey, and contribute to the 2006 European Year of Workers' Mobility. The third Foundation Forum, devoted to the topic of competitiveness and globalisation, will take place in Dublin in November.



The Foundation's 2006 projects will explore geographical and labour market mobility, employment creation, and managing restructuring and its effects. The links between social dialogue, working time arrangements and reconciliation of work and personal/family life, as well as the attractiveness of workplace, will be the key topics related to the work-life balance issue. Other research will analyse the Europeanisation of collective bargaining, industrial relations in the public sector, wage flexibility, the integration of migrants, and the social dimension of competitiveness.

In the coming month, the Life's jigsaw campaign will be launched. The campaign is designed to give an overview of how an ageing workforce, an uneven gender division, and working time constraints challenges Europe. During the coming six months, the Foundation will offer in-depth analysis based on its surveys, reports and cases studies and present possible solutions to the problems.

In my new role as Director of the European Foundation, I am looking forward to an exciting and challenging year. I trust that through our research and analysis we can provide our customers with relevant and timely information. I extend my sincere wishes to you all for a successful and fulfilling year in 2006.

Jorma Karppinen
Director

Flexible working time options: a win-win situation for all

Almost half of all companies and organisations in Europe, with ten or more employees, have put in place flexible working time arrangements, although there are substantial differences across EU Member States in the type of options available.

The Foundation's recently completed survey on working time and work-life balance reveals that managers and employee representatives alike view flexible working time arrangements positively. The benefits include a higher degree of job satisfaction, better adaptation of working hours to the workload, and lower absenteeism rates. The survey found that less than one in three companies or organisations in Cyprus, Greece and Portugal offers any flexibility with regard to working hours, while about two-thirds of companies in Finland, Latvia and Sweden do so. The survey will be published in April 2006.

Read more on www.eurofound.eu.int/press/communiqué/2006/jan/newsletter2.htm

Catering for better working conditions

Working conditions in the hotels, restaurants and catering sector in the EU are characterised by low wages, long hours, poor career structures and often weak enforcement of equality policies, according to new research published by the EMCC in its Sector Futures series.

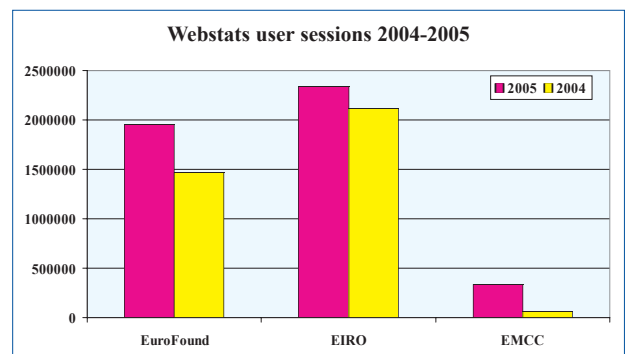
The 7.5 million workers in Europe's hotels and catering sector have seen their fair share of changes and challenges in the past, and the first of three EMCC Sector Futures articles on the sector does not envisage a much brighter future. Some of the changes result from the inevitable effects of globalisation, enlargement and low-cost travel, encouraging the flow of migrant workers, and others are the consequence of changing lifestyles, more informed and flexible customers, the ageing workforce, and stricter legislation and human rights awareness. The growth and development of Europe's hotel and catering sector depends largely on the uptake of new technology: greater overall use of information technology and new kitchen and production technologies.

Read more on www.eurofound.eu.int/press/communiqué/2006/jan/newsletter3.htm

Research in brief

Substantial increase in online users

The Foundation's main website, EuroFound, recorded almost 2 million user sessions in 2005, an increase of 33% on 2004. The website of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) also saw an increase of 11% – to 2.3 million user sessions over the year. It was, however, the website of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC) that witnessed the biggest increase of user sessions, growing by 133% to 340,000 user sessions in 2005.



Source: European Foundation ©2006

Contributing to the Austrian EU Presidency

The Foundation will bring its recent findings and analysis on demographic challenges and the role of the family in society, and the performance of the social public services, to two events held under the auspices of the Austrian EU Presidency during the first six months of 2006. On 2-3 February, the Foundation's recent analysis of the role of the family in society will be presented at the conference on *Demographic challenges - Family needs partnership* which takes place in Vienna. At the *Healthy ageing in Europe* symposium, promoted by a network of 10 European NGOs (EHAAF) on 8-9 March, the Foundation will stress the necessity of increasing the performance of social public services.

Attractive workplace for all

A new Foundation project, 'Attractive workplace for all: A contribution to the Lisbon strategy at company level', aims at identifying pioneering company practices, policies and agreements and showing how the Lisbon strategy is being implemented on the ground at company level. In its first phase, examples of innovative company practice will be gathered from Austria, France, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden and the United Kingdom. These case examples will be grouped under the thematic headings of 'fostering employability', 'increasing the labour market participation of underemployed groups', 'integration into the labour market of people at risk of exclusion such as early school leavers and the long-term unemployed', 'make work pay', 'make work attractive', 'towards balanced flexibility', and 'business creation and entrepreneurship'. Results of the project will be available in August 2006.

More information on

<http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/employment/quality/attractiveworkplace.htm>

Biomedical healthcare industry underfunded

Misallocation of resources and financial restrictions in Europe's public healthcare systems are having an adverse effect on the potential growth of the biomedical healthcare sector, the latest EMCC Sector Futures report claims. With public healthcare systems unable to devote funds to research and thereby play a pivotal role in shaping demand for healthcare products and services, Europe's biomedical healthcare sector is producing far fewer new cures and medicines than are potentially possible. According to the report, EU's goals of a homogeneous supply side, increased international competitiveness and improved public trust of biomedical healthcare products and services, are not being addressed due to a lack of resources which would allow the fledgling industry to grow.

Read the report on www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/sector_futures.htm

Reaching out to stakeholders across Europe

During the coming six months, the Foundation will bring research and information about work-life balance, quality of life, and mobility to its stakeholders in Finland, Denmark, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Romania, Latvia and Lithuania. The national visits are part of the Foundation's strategy to meet with the Foundation's stakeholders and audiences on a regular basis, and to highlight current research in a particular national perspective. The events, which include bilateral visits to the representatives of workers, employers and governments, will also be an opportunity to introduce Jorma Karppinen, the new director, and encourage participation and contributions to the Foundation Forum in November 2006. By the end of the year, the Foundation's directorate will have visited all 25 EU Member States since the visits were inaugurated in 2005.

News about the national visits is available on www.eurofound.eu.int/events/future.htm

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Presenting the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO)

1 February 2006, Sofia, Bulgaria
Foundation own event

Best practices to prevent, reduce and combat undeclared and illegal labour in the construction industry

16-19 February, Budapest, Hungary
European Federation of Building and Woodworkers

Demographic challenges – Family needs partnership

2-4 February 2006, Vienna, Austria
Austrian EU Presidency event

European Year of Workers' Mobility 2006

20-21 February, Brussels, Belgium
European Commission

Unless otherwise stated, publications are in English

Sector Futures Chemical industry (3 reports)

www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/sector_futures.htm

Sector Futures Hotel and catering (3 reports)

www.emcc.eurofound.eu.int/sector_futures.htm

Industrial relations in the railway sector (Thematic features)

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef0578.htm

Industrial relations in agriculture

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef0585.htm

Survey data report Denmark

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef05165.htm

Programme of work 2006 (all languages)

www.eurofound.eu.int/publications/htmlfiles/ef0539.htm

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