

communiqué



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Address to Parliament

Hubert Krieger, research manager, addressed a workshop during a conference of the European Parliament on the Social Policy Agenda in Brussels on 22 September. The workshop was chaired by Proinsias De Rossa, MEP (PES) and vice-chair of the Employment and Social Affairs Committee, and the other speakers were Karl-Johan Lönnroth, director, Employment and Social Affairs DG and Hans-Horst Konkolewsky, director of the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work.

Drawing on Foundation research findings, Hubert Krieger said there was 'no

A programme for change

Announcing the new four-year work programme of the Foundation, Raymond-Pierre Bodin said the programme, *Analysing and Anticipating Change to support Socio-Economic Progress*, was the distillation of a long process of reflection and debate which had been carried out by the Foundation over the past year. The Foundation had drawn on its own resources as well as external expertise in defining a programme which would meet future challenges.

At the outset a series of guiding principles was formulated which, the director said, would inform all future work of the Foundation.

'Our core areas of expertise must be consolidated and developed. These have been condensed into three fields: working conditions, living conditions and industrial relations. There will be fewer but more substantial research programmes in future rather than a multiplicity of projects. This will bring greater focus and integration to the work.'

Important themes such as equal opportunities, supporting social inclusion, promoting better employment, managing



Director Raymond-Pierre Bodin and past directors Clive Purkiss (left) and Wiebe de Jong (right) discuss the 25th anniversary booklet.

diversity and examining the use of time will be developed on a transversal basis across the three core areas.

'We are keenly conscious of the need to increase accountability, transparency and cost effectiveness. Programmes will include elements which will allow objective performance evaluation. More active communication with, and feedback from, key users will form part of the monitoring and evaluation process.'

The objective of the programme is to provide strategic guidelines for the work of the Foundation from 2001 to 2004 and the framework for the development of the annual programmes of work. The ability of the Foundation to respond to the needs of the social actors at EU level has been given priority as an objective in the formulation of the programme. ☀

determinism in the economic and societal development to automatically improve the quality of work.'

He said the general direction of policy initiatives should be towards decentralisation of employment regulation but only when combined with a serious partnership approach. New forms of financial participation could also contribute another dimension to this approach.

Overall, microeconomic analysis has to start from the position that management has the prime responsibility for employment within the existing legal and contractual framework, according to Hubert Krieger.

Concluding, he said that the Foundation was extremely pleased at the central role given to the quality dimension of work, industrial relations and social policy, making them a cornerstone of the new Social Policy Agenda. ☀

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Self-employment

Self-employment accounts for nearly 15% of total employment in the European Union. As a growing sector, it requires careful consideration in the context of labour market policy. The Employment Options of the Future survey looks at issues of entrepreneurship and self-employment from a range of perspectives including who are the self-employed, what are their characteristics and working conditions and who wants to join the ranks of the self-employed? A summary of the survey findings, *Self-employment: choice or necessity*, has been published by the Foundation.

General characteristics

According to the findings, the self-employed are predominately men who account for 72% compared to 28% women. (The comparable ratio among dependent employees is 56%-44%.) Analysis of the survey results shows that gender is the most significant factor (out of 18 variables) affecting an individual's preference for self-employment.

On average, they are better educated than those in dependent employment. Self-employed women, while representing only a small proportion of this group (28%), are more likely to be better educated than their male counterparts.

Overall, the self-employed are quite happy with their choice of employment status, despite longer working hours. They value their work for intrinsic reasons and for the sake of the work content. In fact, they value this aspect higher than financial reward. The people most likely to start their own business are young men with some

educational qualifications and some experience of the labour market. This represents a dilemma for policy makers, according to the summary, as the design of self-employment measures must strike a balance between intervention in favour of those who need encouragement and support such as women and the unemployed and with making resources and support available to those who would in all probability move into self-employment with few incentives.

Perceptions of self-employment

The interest in self-employment among those currently in dependent employment is high: 20% would prefer the status of self-employment to that of employee. Policy initiatives focusing on those currently in dependent employment who might wish to move into self-employment might free up employment for re-entrants (women returners and the unemployed) who do not indicate a desire to be self-employed.

The summary suggests that the fact that not many women returners expressed an interest in self-employment may indicate that many women are influenced by the image of self-employment as a male preserve. If this is the case, policy makers need to question whether and, in what way, their policies might tend to reinforce the gender segregation of self-employment.

If women are to be increasingly encouraged to become self-employed, it will be necessary to tackle the financial obstacles and provide for forms of self-employment which do not involve long hours and allow family and work to be combined.

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EMU impact

A conference on the impact of EMU on industrial relations will be held by the Foundation at the European Commission's offices in Madrid on 14 December.

The conference speakers will discuss the 'Europeanisation' of industrial relations, its impact on both the private sector and on wage development. Members of the Commission and representatives of the social partners will be invited to comment on the Foundation's research.

Employment 2000

Employment Week 2000 conference and exhibition was held in the Palais des Congrès, Brussels, on 7-9 November. As usual, the event was extremely well attended and there was considerable interest in the Foundation's exhibition of its publications.

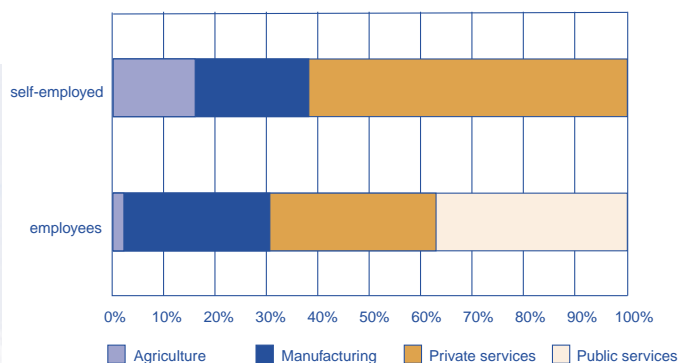
PECs report

Innovative Agreements on Employment and Competitiveness in the European Union and Norway, a new report on recent pacts for employment and competitiveness (PECs), based on a study on collective bargaining and employment carried out by EIRO (European Industrial Relations Observatory), has been published by the Foundation.

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research in figures

Employment status by sector



Source: Employment Options of the Future survey

A road map for policy

Director General for Employment and Social Affairs, Odile Quintin, outlines the Social Policy Agenda, adopted by the Commission on 28 June last, and the role of the Foundation in contributing to its objectives to *Communiqué*.

'The Social Policy Agenda is in essence a road map for policy and action in the employment and social sphere in the European Union over the coming years. The purpose is to confront new and emerging social challenges and to mobilise all stakeholders to actively and constructively play their role in achieving the common European objectives which were agreed at the Lisbon European Council in March 2000.

'Against the backdrop of demographic ageing, radical technological changes, breakneck speed of industrial transformation, globalisation, and imminent enlargement of the European Union, the Lisbon Summit set out a new strategic goal - to make Europe "the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion":

The fundamental questions

'This implies facing up to two fundamental questions: how can we harness the opportunities of the electronic age to help achieve our goal of full employment and promote long-lasting growth? And how can we modernise and improve the European Social Model to cater for old and new social needs while strengthening the capacity of social policies to underpin economic performance ?

'A wide range of actions are outlined in the Agenda. Some are targeted at realising Europe's full employment potential by creating more and better jobs, anticipating and managing change and adapting to the new working environment, exploiting the potential of the knowledge-based economy and promoting mobility while others centre on modernising and improving social protection, promoting social inclusion, strengthening gender equality and reinforcing fundamental rights and combating discrimination. There are also

initiatives devoted to preparing for enlargement and promoting international co-operation and making the social dialogue contribute to meeting the various challenges.'

Observatory on industrial change

'The European Foundation in Dublin will have a new and important function as a result of the Agenda. It has been invited to establish an information mechanism which would



Director General Odile Quintin

provide European social partners and policy makers with a tool to anticipate the social and employment consequences of industrial change.

'This observatory would be of great assistance to the social dialogue between employers and employees as well as public authorities. It would provide information, data and analysis of existing information on industrial change. This would in turn ensure that we are better equipped for anticipating change and the response to it in the future. The mechanism should be light-weight and cost-effective and it should be established as quickly as possible.

'I am very pleased that the Foundation's new four-year rolling programme 2001-2004, *Analysing and anticipating change to support socio-economic progress*, which has just been adopted, builds on the approach agreed by the European Council in Lisbon and by the European Commission in its Social Policy Agenda.'

Open co-operation

'That the Social Policy Agenda is different from the past is also due to the fact that it does not simply provide an action programme for the Commission but sets in motion processes of co-operation to achieve the objectives of full employment, quality in work, quality in industrial relations and quality in social policy.

'I would like to emphasise that the new Social Policy Agenda is not a blueprint for harmonising social policy across the Union, nor is it about imposing new legislation or additional costs on business. The focus of this Agenda is on the promotion of quality of work, quality of social policy and quality of industrial relations. With many more countries set to join the Union very soon, measures are proposed to tackle the specific challenges of enlargement to the east. 'I hope and expect that the Foundation will play its part in providing information, analysis and ideas which will facilitate the Social Agenda's implementation. I am especially interested in the Foundation's input on the matter of 'quality' in social policy.'

events diary

5-7 December

Online Information 2000, London. Foundation exhibition.

7 December

Launch EIRO Annual Review 1999, Madrid.

11-12 December

Innovative Agreements on Employment and Competitiveness, Paris. Foundation conference in conjunction with French Presidency.



Publications mentioned

Innovative agreements on employment and competitiveness in the EU and Norway

Available in EN
€20

Cat. no. SX-26-99-425-EN-C

Negotiating European Works Councils: a comparative study of Article 6 and 13 agreements (Copublication with DG Employment)

Available in EN (to be published also in DE and FR)

€20

Cat. no. TJ-31-00-029-EN-C

Self-employment: choice or necessity? (summary)

Available in DA EN IT NL PT (other languages to follow)

www.eurofound.ie

EIRO Annual Review 1999

Available in DE EN FR
www.eiro.eurofound.ie

EIRO online database

www.eiro.eurofound.ie

New publications

Combining family and work: the working arrangements of men and women

(summary)

Available in EN (to be published in all languages)

www.eiro.eurofound.ie

Health implications for workers in sustainable production and services

Available in EN

€16

Cat. no. TJ-31-00-796-EN-C

The impact of EMU on industrial relations (summary)

Available in EN (to be published in all languages)

www.eiro.eurofound.ie


• Free publications can be downloaded directly from the website and priced publications can be ordered online (www.eurofound.ie). They can also be ordered from your usual bookshop or from one of the sales agents of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (addresses available at www.eur-op.eu.int).

Micro firms

The Foundation will host an international workshop, Working Life in Micro Firms, on 7-8 December in Dublin.

Broadly, the workshop will examine policies and strategies which encourage adaptability and modernisation, improve security and working conditions and develop initiatives of potential entrepreneurs in micro firms by presenting and discussing both the Foundation's research findings and other initiatives.

Commenting on the workshop, Filomena Oliveira, research manager, said it will be an opportunity to open the debate on research and policy making developed in geographical areas with different socio-economic characteristics from the EU, such as the Central and Eastern European countries which are applicants to the EU and the United States; to establish further contacts/networks for future co-operation and bridge academic, professional and cultural gaps.

For this event, the Foundation will invite researchers, experts and representatives of EU bodies, national governments and social partners specialising in the area of micro enterprises and small and medium enterprises. 

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EIRO review launch

Launching the German edition of the EIRO Annual Review 1999 at the European Commission's offices in Berlin on 12 October, Director Raymond-Pierre Bodin, told industrial relations practitioners:

'A social model of Europe is emerging. An essential part of this model is social dialogue which takes place at EU-level between the social partners, ETUC, UNICE and CEEP. The basis for social dialogue lies in the

Maastricht Treaty of 1991 and the Amsterdam Treaty of 1997.

'Changes and events indicate a clear trend towards the "Europeanisation" of working life and industrial relations, although there is still very little systematic analysis about their repercussions and impacts at national level.

The work of EIRO and the findings in the Review should promote debate on this critical new direction in industrial relations:

The Review will be launched in Paris on 6 November. It is available online at

www.eurofound.ie 


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Comparing EWCs

Negotiating European Works Councils, a comparative study of Article 6 and Article 13 agreements, has been jointly published by the Foundation and the Employment and Social Affairs DG of the Commission.

Overall, the report states, as a result both of following the terms of the Directive more closely, and of processes of "good practice" diffusion across negotiators, agreements under Article 6 are more comprehensive in the range of issues they address than were the earlier Article 13 agreements.

In general terms, the study indicates that the social partners in Europe are showing significant 'joint learning' in their handling of EWCs.

The report concludes that for the increased potential of EWCs, established under Article 6, to develop an active role to be actually being realised requires a shift in focus - from examining the provisions of agreements to investigating practical experience. 

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