

# COMMUNIQUÉ



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

*for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions*

## Employment tops the agenda in 1999

Employment issues are a principal focus for the Foundation's 1999 work programme. Commenting on the programme, director Clive Purkiss said: "Our programme for the years 1999 and 2000, has been designed to research European employment strategy from the different perspectives of our quadripartite board membership - each project tailored to priority research and information needs identified by the Board's representatives from the Commission services; the social partners and Governments of Member States.

"The quality of work, and changes in the labour market from the perspective of improvements in living and working conditions, are the Foundation's main concerns. Projects approach the qualitative aspect from different angles: work organisation, equal opportunities, direct participation and ageing are some of the aspects of employment which will be examined in depth by new work.

"The Foundation's innovative work on employee participation (EPOC) will be further expanded by a related project which will examine the potential of financial participation as a means for promoting


greater employee participation in enterprises through profit sharing or share ownership. This is an area on which little comparative work has been done and for which the Foundation is well equipped, given its structure and its previous work in direct participation. "Our survey on attitudes to work - Employment Options of the Future - this year moves into the analysis stage and will form the basis of discussion for a number of events during the current German Presidency of the EU. The analysis will evaluate fundamental attitudes to work and potentially has significant implications for employment policy.

"The ageing workforce is a pressing issue in Europe. The Foundation has done extensive work in the area and is organising an international conference to take place during the Finnish Presidency of the EU in the second half of the year. The conference will draw together work from the Foundation and others on labour market measures to promote the re-integration of older workers." 



*Director Clive Purkiss*

## Telework issues

Telework experts from the Union and Central Eastern Europe attended a workshop on Teleworking - Transborder Issues on the 14 -15 January 1999 - in Dublin. An overview of the present situation of telework was presented for each participating country. The workshop reviewed the ongoing developments in teleworking: assessing the impact of teleworking on working conditions and the significant trends which are emerging in different national settings. The combined impact of technological change, organisational innovation and new attitudes on the evolution of telework across Europe were assessed and projections for future directions, particularly with regard to policy initiatives, in telework were examined. 

## New board

A number of new members of the Administrative Board of the Foundation have been appointed by the Council on 19<sup>th</sup> October 1998. At the meeting of the Administrative Board on 13<sup>th</sup> November 1998, Mr Jan Willem Van Den Braak was elected the new chairperson of the Board of Administration of the Foundation for the next two years. Mr Van Den Braak is representative of the Dutch employers group. Ms Marjaana Valkonen, from the Finnish trade union, his predecessor as chairperson, has been elected vice-chairperson. The Board also has a new vice-chairperson from the Commission - Ms Odile Quintin of DG V. Mr. Marc Boisnel, from the French Ministry of Labour, was reelected as vice-chairperson. 

### *In this issue*

Gender report • EMU • Linking welfare and work • Green companies • Stress at work Catalogue No. SY-AA-99-001-2A-C

# EMU overview

The money markets and the euro are the main focus of attention as Europe takes the giant step of monetary union, whilst the common currency is an obvious and reassuring symbol of this move towards greater unity, there are broader issues - EMU has profound implications for employment and social conditions. And, although these areas have enormous impact on citizens lives, and livelihood, the impact of monetary union on them has received less attention.

## Comprehensive review

Given this, the Foundation has carried out a comprehensive review of the existing literature on two specific areas of concern: EMU and the Implications for Industrial Relations and EMU, Employment, Social Conditions and Social Benefits. In the following, we look briefly at EMU from these two perspectives.

Broadly, there are two opposing scenarios in relation to EMU. On the one hand, there are those who argue EMU will bring greater growth, employment and prosperity. On the other, there are those who forecast that the European Central Bank will set unduly restrictive limits on monetary policy, in an effort to maintain price stability, which may lead to deflation and worse unemployment.

## Macro/micro level

While there has been considerable research done at the macro-level within Member States there has been very little research at the micro-level and at company and sectoral levels. Many of the studies are "sector blind", with a particular focus on

manufacturing. More attention needs to be paid to the public and private services sector which provides significant levels of employment. There have been few detailed cross-national studies or econometric studies on wages, employment or labour mobility. In relation to EMU and employment and working conditions there are two main areas of debate - the nature of the adaptation measures and the relevant level to implement them (European, national and local).

## Critical variables

In relation to both studies it was evident that there is confusion and disagreement about EMU. Clearly, there is a difficulty in that much of the literature is based on perception rather than empirical evidence. The complexity of EMU means that there are many critical variables which impact on it, such as public policy at national and European level (fiscal and employment policies), globalization, and technology. There are also contradictory tendencies. For instance, it may reduce employment in some areas and increase it in others.

New solutions must be found to replace the exchange rate as a mechanism to manage the economy. If monetary and fiscal policies become further coordinated the main room for manoeuvre will be in term of wages, social benefits and labour mobility. These pinpoint the important role of the social partners in ensuring that the development of the EMU has positive economic and social impacts.

## EMAS workshop

The EU Environmental Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS) and its practical application in SMEs was the main focus of a European Workshop on Environmental Management and Health and Safety held at the Foundation on 3-4 December 1998. Detailed papers by the contributors to the workshop and the case studies conducted on the companies have been included in a new publication launched at the workshop. It is the fourth publication in the series - *Design for Sustainable Development* - coordinated by Henrik Litske, research manager at the Foundation. The workshop was organised jointly by the Foundation and a number of Swedish organisations as a preparatory activity for Sweden's Presidency of the European Union in the year 2001.

## The employment market

A seminar, Concertation and Negotiation about Employment and the Employment Market, organised by DG V of the European Commission, was held in Brussels at the end of January.

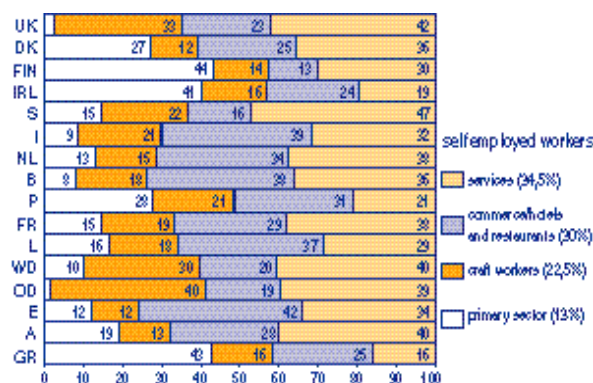
The seminar examined the role of social dialogue and collective bargaining in promoting employment and structural labour market reforms in the context of the European strategy for employment. Over 80 invited experts from Member States and the Commission attended - Kevin P O'Kelly and Hubert Krieger, research managers, represented the Foundation.

## research in figures

### Self-employment in the EU

Self-employment is well above the European average in three countries of southern Europe: 46% of workers are self-employed in Greece, 33% in Italy and 31% in Portugal. The proportion of self-employment is lowest in Sweden (8%), Denmark (8%) and the Netherlands (10%).

Source : Second European Survey on Working Conditions



# Equal Opportunities

Achieving tangible progress in promoting equal opportunities between women and men is one of the main lines of action of the 1999 Employment Guidelines. The guidelines call on the combined efforts of the Member States, regions, social partners and Community institutions to pay particular attention to this strategy and in particular the use of benchmarks and gender mainstreaming in all their policies. While progress has been made in gender equality, much work remains to be done.

Mia Heikkinen, research manager at the Foundation, has been drawing together the work of the Foundation to present a broad picture of the European experience of gender relations.

"Our surveys indicate that gender equality is still a major problem - and a growing problem. We have drawn the work of the Foundation together because it has a greater coherence and makes more of an impact as one package. The research demonstrates the need for complementary strategies at the workplace and in the community, and the need for partnership between social partners and those groups affected by direct and indirect discrimination."

The Foundation's work is divided into two: data collection through European-wide surveys; and positive action projects which assess the effect of policies on a practical level.

Positive action projects include "Equal Opportunities and Collective Bargaining" and the forthcoming new project on "Promoting Gender in the Workplace" which examine the brokering of collective and management agreements. Employment, family and community activities: a new balance between women and men - provides information on new job creation and looks at a wider framework within which women and men interact in our society.

## New Survey

Employment Options of the Future is a new survey of over 30,000 people, including women returning to the workforce, which was carried out by the Foundation during 1998. Significant data on part-time work, flexible working hours, temporary contracts and care of the elderly - issues central to

understanding women's working lives - have been collected by the survey.

"You cannot talk about gender by talking only about work. When you are talking about women you need to include the family and even the community aspect. We are currently examining the data on the uptake of part-time work and sabbaticals by women, their attitudes toward flexible work, and why more women have temporary contracts than men."



Mia Heikkinen Research Manager

## Working conditions updated

The third European Survey on Working Conditions in the series will be carried out during 1999 and will continue to collect data on the specific working conditions women face in the labour market. It will also raise a number of new issues which were not previously dealt with such as very repetitive work which may have a serious impact on women's and men's health and working lives.

## Collective agreements


*Equal Opportunities and collective bargaining* covers new research ground in the Union - examining the mainstreaming of equal opportunities in industrial relations. "It is not just looking at how equal opportunities could be more integrated into collective bargaining. It is also looking at how collective bargaining could be modernized so that it would be more attractive to women in the labour force. It also deals with the role of the social partners; it identifies their responsibilities

and how they can participate in gender related issues and mainstreaming.

## Promoting gender equality

During 1999, the Foundation starts a new project - Promoting Gender Equality at the Workplace - which is partly a follow-up to the work of the collective bargaining and the working conditions projects.

"This project looks at how equal opportunities can be integrated into the workplace in a practical way at the enterprise/corporate level. Equality plans in enterprises will be evaluated as to their impact on gender equality. The project will also examine the potential of developing some kind of equality "barometer" - a wider concept than equality plans - which can assess the whole structure of the company such as care arrangements for children, company benefits, and atmosphere at the workplace.

"We must work towards mainstreaming equal opportunities but there are problems. Whose idea of gender are you mainstreaming? It is a value judgement. "Women's voice" is not homogenous. It is a good concept but you need to be careful that the issue is not belittled by false claims of mainstreaming. The Foundation's work is focused on identifying the most innovative methods of effective mainstreaming in line with Community strategy." 

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## events diary

### 19 February

ETUI seminar on National Action Programme - Foundation attendance - Brussels

### 25-26 February

European Conference on the Role of the Social Partners in Sustainable Development - Foundation, Dublin

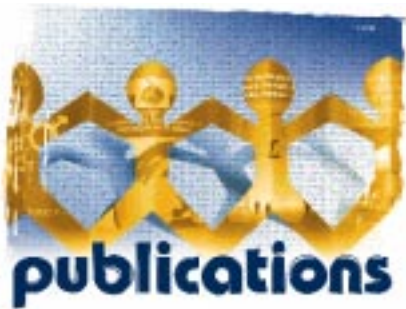
### 25 - 28 February

Workshop - Using Information Sources on Industrial Relations in Europe - Organised jointly by ETUCO and the Foundation - Dublin.

### 11-13 March

American Psychological Association - NIOSH - Work, Stress and Health Conference. Presentation by Pascal Paoli and Robert Anderson - Baltimore, USA.

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## Publications mentioned

**Design for Sustainable Development: Environmental Management and Safety and Health**

Available in EN

Cat. No. SX-17-98-370-EN-C

ECU 28

**Linking Welfare and Work**

Available in EN

Cat. No. SX-19-98-245-EN-C

**Equal Opportunities and Collective Bargaining**

**4. Illuminating the Process**

Available in EN, available shortly in FR and DE

Cat. No. SX-17-98-936-EN-C

ECU 16

**Second European Survey on Working Conditions in Europe (1996)**

Available in EN, in disk format only

Cat. No. SX-05-97-414-EN-Y

ECU 16

**European Industrial Relations Observatory Web Site**

[www.eiro.eurofound.ie](http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie)

## New publications

**European Employment and Industrial Relations Glossary: Luxembourg**

Available in EN

Cat. No. SY-70-91-012-EN-C

ECU 31

**Economic Instruments for Sustainable Development**

Available in EN

Cat. No. SX-18-98-736-EN-C

ECU 18

**Managing an Ageing Workforce: A Guide to Good Practice**

Available in EN, available shortly in DE, ES, FI, FR


Cat. No. SX-19-98-617-EN-C

• Priced publications can 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 <http://eur-op.int/en/general/s-ad.htm>)

Free Publications can be obtained on request from the Foundation, or may be downloaded from the Foundation's Web site <http://www.eurofound.ie/>

## IR information

A workshop for trade union trainers from EU and CEE countries - Using Information Sources on Industrial Relations in Europe - jointly organised by ETUCO and the Foundation, will take place on the 25 - 28 February in Dublin.

The workshop will examine innovative methods of sourcing relevant information and showing the range of electronic-based information sources available. 

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## Stress at work

A major conference on work-related stress in Tokyo in November 1998 identified the similarities and differences in the conditions and trends in working life in the three post-industrial settings - the EU, Japan and the United States. It highlighted the need to exchange experiences and compared problems on a global basis.

The conference based its discussions, in the European context, on the Second Survey on Working Conditions in Europe, carried out by the Foundation in 1996.

The Tokyo Declaration on Work-Related Stress and Health in three Postindustrial Settings, adopted at the conference, sets out a six point plan of action of increased cooperation with regard to implementation, surveillance, education and methodological developments in creating healthier workplaces.

The Institute of Personnel Development in the UK has launched a new publication on stress and its effects on business performance. The publication - *Stress at Work* - which also draws on the findings of the Foundation's Second European Survey of Working Conditions, identifies stress as an increasingly serious health hazard which has serious legal and productivity implications for business. 

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## Linking welfare and work

The integration into work of welfare recipients and excluded people is the theme of a new publication - *Linking Welfare and Work* - which was published by the Foundation in February.

The essential concepts in the debate are explored and explained in a series of articles in the journal. It examines the main type of policies aimed at increasing the re-integration of people into employment through linking welfare to work.

Introducing the publication, Wendy O'Conghaile of the Foundation outlines the challenge facing Europe:

"There have been many reforms and adaptations in recent years, but it is evident that the re-design of social protection systems, in relation to the changing nature of the labour market and our family and social structures, is a long term process requiring varied inputs of knowledge, experience and expertise."

The links between employment, social benefits and activation measures which seek to promote participation by the unemployed in the open labour market through job training, counselling, education and other proactive measures are complex - the policy shifts in area are discussed in a number of essays in the publication.

The journal was edited by Matti Heikkilä of STAKES, the Finnish National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health, while on secondment to the Foundation. The articles are expanded contributions of presentations made at a Foundation workshop in late 1997 and are from Yves Chassard, John Ditch, Dirk Geldof, Walter Hanesch and Bjorn Hvinden. 

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## communiqué

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