



As we move into 1999, it is perhaps unsurprising that the industrial relations scene across Europe remains largely dominated by the same theme as in 1998 and indeed in previous years - employment. As this issue of *EIRObserver* indicates, the topics of creating and maintaining jobs are still major factors in collective bargaining and consultation at all levels. At national level, one of the most important developments of recent months has been the agreement of a national "alliance for jobs" in Germany, in the form of a permanent tripartite body. Issues of employment are also at the heart of the new 1999-2000 national intersectoral agreement in Belgium. Still at national level, the social partners and government in Norway have agreed on closer cooperation on incomes policy, one of the key aims of which is to preserve high employment.

At European sectoral level, we report on a number of recent employment-related joint texts concluded by the social partners in postal services, sugar and cleaning, while at company level, we report on agreements to: boost employment at Seat in Spain; prevent possible closure of the Longbridge Rover plant in the UK; and mitigate redundancies at KPN Telecom in the Netherlands. Finally, concern about potential job losses has been one of the factors prompting unprecedented French-German trade union cooperation over the merger of Hoechst and Rhône Poulenc.

*EIRObserver* presents a small edited selection of features and news items based on some of the reports supplied for the *EIROOnline* database, in this case for November and December 1998. *EIROOnline* - the core of EIRO's operations - is publicly accessible on the World-Wide Web, providing a comprehensive set of reports on key industrial relations developments in the countries of the EU (plus Norway), and at European level. On p.15, we provide a brief guide for readers on how to access and use *EIROOnline*, which can be found at:

<http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/>

EIRO is based on a network of leading research institutes in each of the countries covered and at EU level (listed on p. 16), coordinated by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Its aim is to collect, analyse and disseminate high-quality and up-to-date information on key developments in industrial relations in Europe, primarily to serve the needs of a core audience of national European-level organisations of the social partners, governmental organisations and EU institutions.

Mark Carley, Editor



Transnational	EMF adopts "European coordination rule" for national bargaining	Page 2
Austria	Working time talks often postponed in bargaining	Page 3
Belgium	National intersectoral agreement concluded for 1999-2000	Page 4
Finland	More local bargaining on the agenda	Page 5
Germany	Industrial relations programme of the new "red-green" government	Page 6
Italy	Results of first elections to public sector representative bodies	Page 7
Sweden	Committee proposes greater authority for mediators and restrictions on right to strike	Page 8
News		Pages 9-14
EIRO	EIROOnline - the Observatory's database on the Web	Page 15

## EMF adopts "European coordination rule" for national bargaining

*The European Metalworkers' Federation has adopted a resolution on "collective bargaining with the euro", which contains a number of guiding principles for national bargaining.*

On 9-10 December 1998, the European Metalworkers' Federation (EMF), which represents 7 million workers in 55 unions in 25 countries, held its third European collective bargaining conference. Under the title *Collective bargaining with the euro*, delegates discussed the consequences of EU Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) for bargaining, and paths towards closer European trade union cooperation. Discussion centred on a draft resolution, which was adopted with a high degree of consensus. Although the resolution must still be accepted by the EMF executive committee, it is an important document which for the first time develops a comprehensive strategy for bargaining under EMU.

### EMU and collective bargaining

EMF takes a generally positive view in the resolution on the introduction of the euro, which is seen as "a significant and necessary step towards the strengthening of economic and political unity in Europe". However, EMF criticises an allegedly one-sided economic approach behind EMU, which so far refers almost exclusively to monetary stability: "The transfer of monetary policy to a European Central Bank committed solely to the stability of the currency cannot ensure the social and political unity of Europe or the welfare of its citizens on a lasting basis." Instead, EMF demands a new monetary policy which considers equally monetary stability and employment promotion, thus increasing the need for more active European-level macroeconomic policy and intervention.

As to the impact on collective bargaining, EMF assumes that "wage and bargaining policies under EMU will be exposed to the pressure of greater competition, thereby exacerbating the risk of a downward spiral." These assumptions have been supported by recent research carried out on behalf of EMF by the Institute for Economic and Social Research (WSI) (*EIRObserver* 6/98 p.2).

### "European coordination rule"

For EMF, one important means of avoiding a possible downward spiral on bargaining issues is a close European coordination of national bargaining. The core of the "EMF's coordination approach" is that bargaining should remain at national level but follow common rules which can limit national competition on wages and working conditions.

The EMF resolution thus defines a "European coordination rule" for national bargaining - the first time that a leading European-level union organisation has taken such an initiative. The resolution states that:

*The key point of reference and criterion for trade union wage policy in all countries must be to offset the rate of inflation and to ensure that workers' incomes retain a balanced participation in productivity gains. The commitment to safeguard purchasing power and to reach a balanced participation in productivity gains is the new European coordination rule for coordinated collective bargaining in the metal sector all over Europe.*

However, this attempted return to a productivity-oriented bargaining policy does not mean that all metalworkers' unions must follow the same bargaining pattern. On the contrary:

*the unions keep their full autonomy and take full responsibility in respect of how they use this distribution space for the improvement of wages and measures geared towards fostering employment such as reduction of working time and training, for a new organisation of work or special benefits as for example early retirement measures or equal treatment rules. This is their choice and their responsibility - facing actual needs.*

### Further Europeanisation of bargaining

The EMF "coordination rule" deals mainly with macroeconomic aspects of bargaining and defines a "competition-neutral" conception of bargaining which is rather defensive, merely maintaining a certain level of national social development. However, EMF also sees a longer-term need for "continual improvement and adjustment of pay and working conditions in European metalworking towards the level of the advanced countries". EMF thus seeks the introduction of "European minimum standards, which should be raised progressively". Initially, EMF affiliates should agree minimum standards in areas such as flexibility, pay increases or minimum wages. In June 1998, the EMF executive committee adopted a European charter on working time, whereby affiliates agreed on a maximum annual working time of 1,750 hours as a minimum standard.

As a second step, EMF seeks European framework agreements on certain minimum standards. Therefore, it supports European Commission initiatives to promote European sectoral social dialogue. EMF strongly criticises the position of the Western European Metal Trades Employers' Organisation (WEM), which has so far refused any official contacts with EMF.

### Further action plans

In future, all national affiliates will report regularly within EMF on the implementation of the European coordination rule. National reports will be evaluated within the EMF bargaining committee and executive committee. Furthermore, EMF will initiate or continue the following activities:

- organisation of regional and bilateral bargaining "cross-links" and the exchange of bargaining observers and negotiators;
- involvement of EMF observers, to set out pan-European positions and pass on information, in national bargaining;
- creation of a coordinating committee on bargaining for Central and Eastern Europe;
- construction of a "European data system", providing data for bargaining and information exchange;
- development of new instruments for sector-specific coordination of EWCs;
- initiating joint transnational action to establish a pan-European wage and bargaining policy. Therefore, EMF calls for the right to undertake sympathy strikes and supports unions in those countries without this right.

EMF calls for further development of its own policy procedures and institutions and asks its secretariat to present concrete reform proposals in 1999.

### Commentary

With the arrival of the euro, European trade unions seem to recognise that the introduction of a single currency will have fundamental effects on bargaining and might accelerate the pressure for downward competition on wages and working conditions. To avoid this, from a union point of view there seems to be no alternative to a closer "Europeanisation" of bargaining.

After national unions in Benelux and Germany took the initiative for closer coordination of bargaining policy in their September 1998 "Doorn declaration" (*EIRObserver* 6/98 p.2), EMF is the first major European Industry Federation to agree a demanding policy concept for a renewal of a solidaristic bargaining policy at European level. With the adoption of a European coordination rule for national bargaining, EMF has created a reasonable instrument which recognises national differences in economic development and bargaining systems but also defines common guidelines for non-competitive national bargaining policy. As EMF president Tony Janssen put it: "The European metalworkers' unions need not have the same demands, but all demands must go into the same direction." (Thorsten Schulten, Institute for Economic and Social Research (WSI))

DE9812283F (Related record: DE9810278F)

18 December 1998

## Working time talks often postponed in bargaining

*In the late 1998 Austrian collective bargaining round, negotiations on working time issues were frequently deferred until later, partly because developments over the past 10 years have made the issue very complex.*

Working time issues in Austria have risen to some prominence recently, as illustrated by: an ongoing "tug-of-war" over Sunday work and public holiday work; the perennial theme of working time flexibility (EIRObserver 1/97 p.2); the slowly simmering issue of reductions in working time; and, in commerce and restaurants/hotels, the issue of minimum daily working hours.

Working time matters featured in the autumn 1998 collective bargaining round, but with relatively few results and frequent postponements.

### Paper industry

On 4 December 1998, the paper and cardboard-making industry (10,000 employees) agreed to reduce working time for workers involved in fully continuous shift production from 38 to 36 hours per week without a proportional reduction in the monthly wage or salary. The agreement had been preceded by almost two months of wrangling between the industry section of the Austrian Chamber of the Economy (WKÖ) on the one hand, and the Chemical Workers' Trade Union and the industry section of the Union of Salaried Employees (GPA), on the other.

This sectoral agreement on working time does not become effective immediately. Enterprises have until the end of 2001 to implement it. Even then, given the consent of the works council, they can take another six to 12 months. In any case, the 36-hour limit is already in force for about 80% of the workers in continuous shift production in paper-making due to works agreements signed over the last few years. However, there have been signs that the future of the works agreements might be in the balance as the paper-making industry is in a state of restructuring, with companies continually being bought and sold.

The trade unions are aiming at a 35-hour week, but have now consented not to raise the topic again until 2001. The same goes for flexibility.

After mineral oils, paper is the second industry to agree a 36-hour working week for fully continuous shift production. The printing sectoral agreement also sets 36 hours as the norm.

### Metalworking

The metalworking sector is the linchpin in setting standards across the whole of manufacturing. Whilst working time was mentioned as an issue before negotiations started in metalworking, it was ultimately decided to postpone the issue in favour of higher wages now (EIRObserver 6/98 p.9). It is currently envisaged to deal with working time as a package. This would cover opportunities for part-time work, overtime and "surplus time" (that is, hours worked between the agreed working time norm and the legal limit of 40 hours per week).

Here, as in construction, it is mainly the overtime issue that will need to be addressed. A survey in September 1998 revealed that surplus and overtime hours during the current economic upswing had increased by 20% amongst men and by 40% amongst women, in comparison with 1995 when economic conditions were more depressed. One quarter of employees work overtime every week.

### Commerce

When the negotiations began in commerce on 15 October 1998, the GPA commerce section placed on the agenda a working time reduction from 38.5 to 35 hours a week. The aim was not to achieve the reduction all in one go but to set a timetable for an incremental reduction, leaving monthly salaries untouched.

One month later, little more than a salary increase was agreed and working time had all but disappeared from the agenda. One reason is the union's simultaneous demand to fix a minimum daily working time of four hours in an attempt to drive employment which is only partially covered by social security out of the sector.

### Satisfaction amongst employees

A survey conducted in October 1998 indicated that 93% of private sector employees were satisfied with their current working time arrangements. Some 5% of full-time employees said that they would prefer to work part time, and 14% of part-time employees said that they would prefer to work full time. At the beginning of 1997, by comparison, 11% and 8% respectively wanted to switch. Of women working full time, 10% would now prefer part time work, and 13% of women working part time would like to switch to full time. For the first time, the latter percentage is greater than the former.

Of women working part time, 61% stated that their income was either insufficient or just barely enough to cover expenses.

### Commentary

With the pay round practically concluded, working time emerges as a complex and touchy issue. The trade unions have generally aimed at deals that trade flexibility for reduced hours. This is a feasible strategy in manufacturing but it offers little scope in commerce or other services. Here employers, relying on unskilled part-time women and students, have already attained a remarkable degree of flexibility by employing many for short hours. In this area, trade unions feel pulled both ways - towards working time reductions for full-time workers and towards a minimum daily working time for part-time workers. The latter has long existed for restaurants and hotels but is increasingly under attack by employers.

In manufacturing, on the other hand, there are next to no part-time employees. Here the issue for employers is to cut costs by redistributing working time across the year without having to pay overtime premia. The ski manufacturers, for instance, wish to employ workers for 50 hours per week during the summer but for only 30 hours during the winter when distributors and retailers are stocked up and demand on manufacturers is slack. The 50 hours can currently be worked only if working time averages out to the agreed normal level of working time over a reference period of eight weeks. The employers' demand would require an averaging period of 52 weeks that would, in turn, require legal change.

It was possible for the paper industry deal to be struck because of the very specific circumstances imposed by the production technology involved and because of the previous works agreements concluded by large manufacturers. (August Gächter, IHS)

AT9812115F (Related records: AT9810107F, AT9811113N, AT9811111N, AT9705111F, AT9801155F, AT9810108N, AT9811112N)

11 December 1998

## National intersectoral agreement concluded for 1999-2000

*In November 1998, the Belgian social partners reached a new two-year national intersectoral agreement. Unlike attempts in previous years, they managed to do so without the government's intervention.*

Negotiations on a new two-year intersectoral national agreement for 1999-2000 were characterised by a set of interwoven factors that at times seemed to resemble a Gordian knot.

Over recent years, negotiations have had to take into consideration a statutory wage norm, which determines the maximum permitted wage increase on the basis of expected pay trends in neighbouring countries (France, Germany and the Netherlands). The maximum pay increase allowed for 1999-2000, as calculated by the experts on the bipartite Central Economic Council, may not exceed 5.9%, including consumer prices index allowances and increases in basic pay rates.

A second parameter was the employers' promise to improve worker training programmes (a promise made in the wider European framework).

A third point of departure was the government's commitment to reduce labour costs (eg by reducing employers' social security contributions) by a total of about BEF 18 billion (EUR 450 million). The trade unions made it clear from the outset that this money could not be distributed amongst employers unless they had made a clear commitment to increase employment.

In addition, each negotiating partner had its traditional list of wishes and "pet projects".

However, despite the difficult bargaining situation, on 18 November 1998 the social partners succeeded in reaching an intersectoral agreement for the 1999-2000 period. Furthermore, the agreement was reached without the government's intervention - unlike attempts in previous years. The rank and file of both employers' and employees' organisations subsequently ratified the agreement, which marks a renewed sense of confidence in the Belgian model of consensus in industrial relations. The agreement was signed formally on 8 December.

### Prime Minister present in spirit? ■

Although the Prime Minister, Jean-Luc Dehaene, was not physically there during the negotiations, it arguably seemed at

times as if he were present in spirit. According to some commentators, the social partners resorted to a favourite negotiation tactic of the prime minister when confronted by this type of complex bargaining situation: tying everything together in order to unravel the knot.

All the social partners had a somewhat ambivalent attitude towards the wage norm issue. Although the employers are in principle strongly in favour of the wage norm, they also recognise that some more affluent sectors want to be more generous in terms of pay increases. The unions recognise that their rank and file also expect greater pay increases after several years of wage restraint. On the other hand, however, there is the shared concern of both sides for the competitiveness of Belgian industry, which ultimately has a major impact on employment. The November agreement solves the issue by not fixing a wage norm across the board, but by calling for "responsibility" during sectoral negotiations, taking into account the national wage norm.

Reductions in labour costs will have to be "earned" each year by the employers. The promised BEF 18 billion is divided into two tranches of BEF 9 billion (EUR 225 million) each. After the first year, an evaluation of the employers' activity in the areas of training, job creation and wage increases will take place. Following a positive evaluation, employers will receive their first tranche of the extra BEF 9 billion, though others may have to wait and improve their performance. Evaluations will be carried out by assessors from the bipartite National Labour Council.

### Specific issues regarding SMEs ■

Specific issues regarding small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are generally negotiated in a separate chapter in intersectoral agreements. The introduction of a 38-hour working week had been hanging like a "sword of Damocles" over the heads of these companies, and a transitional reduction to a 39-hour working week during 1999 was negotiated. Once an evaluation has been carried out, further negotiations will determine exactly how further reductions could be implemented.

A second bone of contention centred on union representation in SMEs. Unions have had this point on the agenda for a long time. A recent experiment in "pooled" representation in the distribution sector will be assessed on its merits for possible extension to a wider range of SMEs.

## Review of occupational classification

The Minister of Employment and Equal Opportunities, Miet Smet, had been placing the more technical issue of occupational classification on the agenda for several years. Equal pay for work of equal work has been one of the strongest commitments made by the government. Employers and employees promise in the new agreement to analyse the degree to which the current system of occupational classification contributes to discrimination between male and female workers. To the extent that it does, they have pledged measures to reverse the discrimination.

Another more "technical" issue concerns the "unemployment trap". Belgium has a relatively high number of low-skilled unemployed workers but at the same time a relatively large number of job openings for the low-skilled. According to employers and unions, the causes have to be found in the narrow gap between unemployment benefits and minimum wages, also taking into account fiscal policies that aggravate the situation. They have asked the government to tackle the problem in exchange for more pragmatism on the issue of the willingness to work of those receiving unemployment benefits, which is according to others the nexus of the unemployment trap problem.

## Commentary

After several years of failed negotiations between the social partners, they have once again reached a national intersectoral agreement. It seems to be the case that the parameters of the negotiations have shifted the debate towards more pragmatism. Pay issues are discussed in a framework of competitiveness and unemployment is not discussed purely from a "gloom and doom" perspective any longer. However, sectoral negotiations within the new intersectoral framework will have to prove that this agreement is strong enough to deliver the promises that it contains. (Peter van der Hallen, WAV)

BE9811252F (Related records: BE9809242F, BE9810249F, BE9711123F, BE9710219F, BE97091115F, BE9702101F)

11 December 1998

## More local bargaining on the agenda

*According to a recent survey by the TT employers' confederation, a key future development in Finland will be an increase in company-level bargaining. This issue is significant in the run-up to the general election in spring 1999.*

The Confederation of Finnish Industry and Employers (TT) conducted a survey in September 1998, aimed at finding out what ideas and measures its member companies in the industrial, building and service sectors consider will bring them success in the next millennium. Over 500 companies responded.

### Support for local bargaining

According to the survey results, in the area of collective bargaining, one goal of TT members is to achieve framework agreements at sectoral level, which provide increased opportunities to develop company-level agreements. Another aim is to develop the present system for ensuring labour market peace, in order to make it more watertight. The move towards local bargaining was seen as the correct direction by companies generally, regardless of their size. Compared with previous surveys, the number of managers who hold this opinion is clearly increasing. The companies consider themselves well prepared internally for concluding agreements at company level. Company size did not influence this viewpoint, which can be interpreted as meaning that the companies have increased their resources in order to deal with the development of local-level agreements as part of future labour market policy.

According to the managers surveyed, sound prerequisites exist for increased local bargaining. In the estimation of half the managers, other employees also regard company-level agreements positively. However, one-fifth of respondents in each size category of company think that employees' attitudes are less positive, or even negative. Managers consider that the development of company-specific preparedness for more cooperative management systems should be continued, so that even those employees with a negative attitude towards local agreements can become convinced of their benefits for companies and staff. In particular, companies would like to agree locally on working time and wages. Almost 90% of respondents considered that it would be good from the standpoint of company needs if only minimum wages and wage structure were laid down by sectoral agreements.

Many companies stated that they were already prepared to create company-level wage systems, with smaller enterprises slightly less prepared. Of the SMEs, 20% felt a need for development in this area, but few of the big companies did so. Personnel are expected by 70% of respondents to adopt a positive or quite positive attitude toward a result- or performance-related wage structure. Only 10% of the respondents in each company-size category expected that personnel would react negatively. Development of a result-related wage system, it was widely believed, would have the strong support of companies and employees.

General working time cuts were regarded as completely unnecessary and out of the question. Over 90% of respondents rejected the idea, and none supported it. Instead, diversification of working time was held to be good both for companies and their personnel. Nine out of 10 companies felt that working time could be diversified for reasons of changes in demand, adaptation, increased operating time and personnel needs.

### Possible labour market reform

The TT survey is highly relevant to the labour market reform proposed by the largest opposition party, the Centre Party, which was overhauled in autumn 1998 in advance of the parliamentary elections in spring 1999. The reform would seek to widen the scope for local-level agreements so that only minimum wages would be set through national sectoral agreements. Both trade unions and the left-wing political parties have rejected the proposals for radical reform completely.

Crucial to the actual direction of change will be the position that the conservative National Coalition Party - currently part of the governing coalition - will adopt when it woos the votes of entrepreneurs. The party is in a contradictory position, as it also has strong support among some groups of workers - eg in the Confederation of Unions for Academic Professionals in Finland (AKAVA). AKAVA has rejected the reform proposal, as have the other main union organisations - the Finnish Confederation of Salaried Employees (STTK) and the Central Organisation of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK). Among the reasons for their stance, the unions blame local agreements in municipalities that have led to lay-offs among teachers.

If the National Coalition Party follows the line espoused by employers, this could constitute a threat to unions after the elections, in the event that the party forms the next government in coalition with the Centre Party.

In a September 1998 membership survey conducted by SAK, 36% considered the present coalition as their preferred choice for the next government. Only 6% saw a Social Democrat-National Coalition Party as the best alternative for wage earners. Only 4% supported a non-socialist government led by the National Coalition and Centre parties. It appears that SAK members would generally support a continuation of the present government, because they believe that tripartite cooperation has worked well. SAK has been trying to motivate its members to vote in the elections.

The worst scenario for SAK would be if a large proportion of its members neglected to vote, in which case its fear of a right-wing government might be realised. Even the present government has provided extended opportunities for the conclusion of local-level agreements. The extension of these possibilities also to cover employers not organised in employers' organisations has aroused strong opposition in the labour movement (*EIRObserver* 6/98 p.10). This experience provides a suggestion of what a rightward change of coalition might mean for industrial relations.

### Commentary

According to the TT survey, a clear goal of management is to increase company-level bargaining, which is seen as a survival strategy for the next millennium. Local-level agreements have become more common during the 1990s (especially in metalworking), and the experiences gained have been positive so far for both bargaining parties. This widening of the scope of local bargaining has proceeded to a considerable degree through the provisions of sectoral collective agreements, without legislative action. However, there is a limit to how far the shift towards the local level can proceed, and it seems that - politically, at least - the talk of this shift antagonises wage earners. Furthermore, it is worth remembering that political rhetoric and actual practice are not necessarily the same. What does seem obvious is that now, already, the markets are dictating the direction of the development. (Juha Hietanen, Ministry of Labour)

F19812186F (Related records: F19708127N, F19803153F, F19807169N, F19806165F, F19804160N, F19810180N, F19810179F)

11 December 1998

## Industrial relations programme of the new "red-green" government

*In October 1998, Germany's new "red-green" federal government presented its political programme.*

The general election on 27 September 1998 resulted in a new "red-green coalition" of the Social Democrats and Alliance 90/The Greens, with a parliamentary majority of 21 seats. On 20 October, the two parties signed a coalition agreement outlining the new government's political programme for the next four years. The agreement contains five major areas with industrial relations relevance.

### Alliance for jobs and training

Cutting persistently high unemployment is the new government's top priority, and a major role in the process is given to a new national "alliance for jobs and vocational training", involving government, trade unions and employers in a new permanent tripartite national institution. The potential issues for agreement include:

- safeguarding training places for all young people;
- integrating young unemployed people into the labour market;
- better employment opportunities for low-skilled workers;
- more flexible and employment-creating working time arrangements;
- reforming unemployment benefits;
- modernising training;
- improving employee participation in productive capital; and
- more sectoral and regional social dialogue, to improve innovation.

The government will take the corresponding political and legal action to support such agreements. The coalition agreement states that all parties have specific responsibilities in improving the employment situation. Therefore, the "alliance for jobs" should be based on the principles that:

- unions and employers are responsible for employment-oriented collective bargaining policy and work organisation, fulfilling companies' flexibility needs and employees' wishes for "time sovereignty";
- companies are responsible for improving innovation and investment and increasing the number of training places; and
- the government is responsible for creating the framework for sustainable growth and employment by reforming tax, decreasing social security contributions, modernising public services and launching a training, research and science "innovation offensive".

An alliance for jobs was subsequently concluded in December 1998 - see p. 10.

### Active labour market policy

The new government places greater emphasis on active labour market policy than its predecessor. It will adopt an action programme immediately to find 100,000 young unemployed people a job or training place, with priority for eastern Germany. The government wants to transform as much as possible of the DEM 170 billion (EUR 87 billion) spent annually on unemployment into active labour market policy. It will thus improve the Employment Promotion Act and promote, particularly, women's employment and employment in private services. Unlike its predecessor, the new administration strongly supports a more active European employment policy and will use its current EU Presidency to propose a European employment pact to make the EU Employment Guidelines more binding and verifiable.

### Fairer labour market conditions

A central aim of the new government is to fight illegal employment and "wage dumping". It will thus: increase drastically fines for illegal employment; make companies responsible when their subcontractors use illegal employment; improve and extend indefinitely the Posted Workers Act (this came into effect from 1 January 1999); and combat the misuse of "marginal" part-time workers and "pseudo self-employment".

### Improved employee rights

A major election pledge of the Social Democrat and Green parties was to repeal some of the previous government's "employee-unfriendly" labour law changes. The coalition agreement states that it will:

- reintroduce 100% sick pay (reduced to 80% in 1996);
- reintroduce comprehensive dismissal protection for small companies with five or more employees;
- reintroduce bad-weather allowances in construction; and
- introduce equality among the bargaining parties regarding the opportunity to organise industrial action.

The changes on sick pay and dismissals came into effect from 1 January 1999. The government will modernise the Works Constitution Act, renew procedures for extending collective agreements, and seek to safeguard and develop "co-determination" in Europe through EWCs and the European Company Statute.

### Reduction of non-wage labour costs

To improve competitiveness and create new employment, the new government will reduce statutory non-wage labour costs. It will reverse the constant rise in social security contributions of recent

years, reducing them from 42.3% of gross pay to below 40% by reforming the social security and tax system. As a first step, revenue from a new energy tax will fund a 0.8-point reduction in social contributions.

### Social partners' reactions

After 16 years of Conservative-Liberal government, unions welcome the red-green coalition and hope that the "change in power" will also lead to a real "change in politics". The German Federation of Trade Unions (DGB) said that the coalition agreement constituted "significant progress" in the direction of more employment and social justice. DGB welcomes, in particular, the proposals on improving employee rights and a more active labour market policy. DGB strongly supports the creation of a new "alliance for jobs" as a permanent tripartite institution.

Employers' associations had criticised the election programmes of the Social Democrats and Greens. The Confederation of German Employers' Associations (BDA) called the new government's programme a step backward which will worsen Germany's competitiveness and is, therefore, not able to create new employment. BDA criticised, in particular, the reintroduction of 100% sick pay and bad-weather allowances, and the strengthening of dismissal protection, which will significantly increase labour costs. BDA strongly disagreed with the tax and social security reform plan, which might increase companies' financial burdens. While BDA stated that employers would not accept an "alliance for jobs" based on the government's political programme, it did express its openness to cooperation with the government and declared that it would not reject national-level tripartite talks.

### Commentary

The election of the new red-green government will obviously have an impact on the development of German industrial relations. In the short run, the new government will revoke some of the previous Conservative-Liberal coalition's legal initiatives, which were introduced against trade union resistance in favour of the employers' side. For the unions, these measures have a high symbolic value, since they seem to demonstrate a real change in German politics.

Even more important for the future of German industrial relations was, however, the question of whether an "alliance for jobs" could be created as a permanent national tripartite institution, as in many other European countries. The preconditions for such an alliance were not favourable. However, on 7 December, the parties succeeded in concluding an alliance for jobs in the form of a permanent tripartite body - see p. 10 (Thorsten Schulten, Institute for Economic and Social Research (WSI))

## Results of first elections to public sector representative bodies

*In November 1998, the first elections of members on Rsu worker representative bodies were held in the Italian public sector. The most significant results were the high participation rate and the success of the main trade union confederations, compared with independent unions.*

In August 1997, the Italian government approved new regulations covering employee representation and collective bargaining in the public sector. The rules included provisions for the creation of a "unitary trade union representation body" (Rappresentanze sindacali unitarie, Rsu) in each public body. Rsus already existed in the private sector.

One of the most important aspects of the law is its definition of the criteria measuring the representativeness of trade union organisations. This is a crucial issue in a sector like the civil service, which has numerous unions, often of a small size. Under the legislation, the representativeness criteria are the number of members and the votes obtained in the Rsu elections. As regards the latter, the minimum threshold is set at 5%.

### The Rsu elections

Between 18 and 25 November 1998, the first Rsu elections were held in the public sector. Around 1.5 million public employees voted in the following divisions: ministries; "non-economic" public bodies; local authorities; health; and universities. The only division not included was schools, where the elections were postponed until January 1999. Across the public sector, the members of 13,500 Rsus were to be elected, with all public sector employees entitled to vote, whether or not they belonged to a union.

Around 100 trade unions presented lists of candidates. Great efforts were made by the main trade union confederations - the General Confederation of Italian Workers (Cgil), the Italian Confederation of Workers' Unions (Cisl), and the Union of Italian Workers (Uil) - which announced that they had presented lists of candidates in approximately 90% of workplaces. Specifically, Cisl presented 12,717 lists (50,000 candidates), Cgil 11,511 lists (56,686 candidates) and Uil 9,490 lists (37,624 candidates).

Among the autonomous unions, those with the largest presence were the General Union of Labour (Ugl - formerly Cisnal) with 2,100 lists, and the rank-and-file Rappresentanze di Base (Rdb) with 1,364 lists (7,250 candidates). The

Italian Confederation of Autonomous Workers' Unions (Cisal) and other independent unions presented joint lists in many instances. The Confederation of Autonomous Unions (Confsal) was also active.

### 1998 Rsu elections in the public sector, % of votes for unions' lists (figures based on 80% of votes cast)

Union	Vote (%)
Cgil	31.7
Cisl	27.4
Uil	17.2
Confsal	5.1
Cisal	4.3
Rdb	4.0
Ugl	3.1
Others	7.2

Source: Aran.

The participation rate for the elections was exceptionally high, varying around the 70% mark. The three main trade union confederations achieved considerable success, obtaining nearly 80% of preferences. On 17 December, the first official figures on the results were issued by the public sector employers' bargaining agency, Aran, covering 80% of the votes cast. The figures are reproduced in the table above.

Sergio Cofferati, Sergio D'Antoni and Piero Larizza, the general secretaries of Cgil, Cisl and Uil respectively, declared themselves extremely satisfied with the election results. All three stressed that the high turnout confirmed that workers are still committed to the unions, and that they recognise the importance both of the election of workforce representatives and of decentralised collective bargaining. Great enthusiasm has also been expressed concerning the success of the major trade union confederations as a whole.

There has been no lack of controversy, however. Before the official results were available, there was a lively argument between Cgil and Cisl about which of them now enjoys greater representativeness in the public sector: both, in fact, claimed that they were now the largest union. Cgil stated that it had overtaken Cisl and that this is a historic achievement, given Cisl's traditional supremacy in terms of membership in the public sector. According to Cisl, however, it had been overtaken by Cgil only in some divisions, and it was still the most representative union if membership is taken into account as well. The official Aran results, based on 80% of the votes cast, puts Cgil at 31.7% of the vote and Cisl at 27.4%.

### Commentary

The Rsu elections in the civil service are an event of great importance from several points of view:

- they are important in terms of trade union democracy, since this was the first time that the public sector unions had competed in terms of workforce votes;
- hitherto the only way to measure the representativeness of the public sector

unions had been their memberships, and doubts had been raised about the reliability of this criterion; and

- the elections are also important in terms of the power relations among the trade union organisations, and in particular between the main confederations and the autonomous unions.

The high participation rate in the Rsu elections in the public sector can be interpreted as indicative of high interest among workers in enterprise-level representation and as suggesting that the unions still enjoy substantial consensus. This has dispelled the fears expressed during the run-up to the elections concerning low participation in the poll, especially by non-unionised workers.

The most significant aspect of the election results is the success of the three union confederations. Together with the fact that only the most representative organisations are allowed to take part in collective bargaining, this lays the basis for the elimination of certain features - like intense fragmentation and competition between the confederal and autonomous unions - which had hampered bargaining in the public sector.

It remains to be seen to what extent these results will influence the ongoing reform of the public administration: one can expect that decentralised bargaining will also centre on this issue, and in particular on its consequences for the employment relationship. (Marco Trentini, Ires Lombardia)

IT9812333F (Related records: IT9709311F, IT9711111N, IT9806229F)

11 December 1998

## Committee proposes greater authority for mediators and restrictions on right to strike

*Sweden's rules on industrial action should be made stricter and public mediators should be given enhanced authority. These highly controversial proposals were put forward in a report recently presented by an official committee. The fate of the proposals is probably dependent on the success or failure of current talks on a "pact for growth".*

In 1997, the Swedish government appointed a committee charged with the task of proposing measures leading to an improved system of pay determination, whereby public mediators would be given improved opportunities to promote "overall public interests" in negotiations (*EIRO*observer 2/97, p.8). The committee's terms of reference were highly controversial and during the year that followed trade unions and employers' organisations repeatedly declared that they did not accept state intervention in the bargaining process.

On 30 November 1998, the committee presented its final report (*Medling och lönebildning*, SOU 1998:141) to Minister Mona Sahlin at the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. It proposes a number of measures that, according to the committee, should make it easier for the bargaining parties to reach agreements and avoid industrial action.

### Enhanced authority for mediators

On mediation, the committee makes the following proposals.

- A new Mediation Authority, with a significantly stronger position than the present one, should be established.
- Among its general tasks, the new Authority should contribute to the setting of standards for pay. Thus, pay statistics should be improved, and each year the Authority should draw up reports on trends in pay in Sweden and in other countries and on the economic preconditions for pay bargaining. These reports should contain a special chapter on trends in pay from an equality perspective. Another general task would be to encourage coordination of the timetables for negotiations and agreement periods for different sectors, as well as the coordination of the negotiations themselves.
- In contrast with the current situation, the Authority should have powers to appoint a mediator without the consent of the bargaining parties. The bargaining parties should be obliged to attend

meetings called by the mediators. The latter, however, would not be able to impose any compulsory arbitration award upon the parties.

- The normal period of notice for industrial action should be extended from seven to 14 days, and the mediators should also have the authority to postpone notified industrial action by 14 days.

### Proportionality in industrial action

The committee believes that there is a need for a shift in the balance of power between trade unions and employers and therefore proposes stricter rules on industrial action.

- A principle of "proportionality" should be introduced. An organisation should thus not have the right to take industrial action resulting in substantial costs for the opposite party and third parties, without itself incurring substantial costs.
- The right to take sympathy action should be limited.
- Industrial action against sole traders or family companies should be prohibited.
- The government should appoint a council to hold regular discussions with the organisations on the labour market to "restore understanding and harmony" and help them to achieve a common understanding of what is good for the country. This common understanding is specified as a "preference for low nominal pay cost increases and low inflation". It is stated that countries such as Austria, Denmark, Finland, Ireland and the Netherlands have benefited from this kind of approach.

### Negative reactions

Immediately after the publication of the report, the Swedish Confederation of Professional Employees (TCO) and the Swedish Confederation of Professional Associations (SACO) issued a joint statement rejecting the proposals as, taken together, more harmful than useful. The task of the mediators should be to minimise the risk of industrial action, not to define the parameters for increases in pay. These unions stated that the best way for the state to promote an effective system of pay determination should be through a sensible economic policy and a stable tax and social security system.

The Swedish Employers' Confederation (SAF) also objected to the idea that the Mediation Authority should have a role in the setting of standards for pay. The

proposals on the restrictions to the right to strike are, however, a step in the right direction although they do not go far enough, SAF believes.

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), which represents blue-collar workers and is the largest of the union confederations, has yet to make any official statement. Lately, it has seemed ready to discuss some restrictions on the right to strike provided that they are introduced by means of collective agreement. It has, however, always strongly opposed statutory restrictions in this respect.

### Commentary

In most cases, reports by Swedish official committees such as the one in question lead to some form of legislation. However, official committees have considered the issue of mediation and industrial action three times before since the beginning of the 1980s, without any result. The fate of this latest highly controversial report is probably dependent on the success or the failure of talks which have been going on between the employers' and trade union confederations on a possible "pact for growth". Just before Christmas 1998, the negotiations seemed to have broken down, but we have not seen the end of this story yet.

The most surprising part of the committee's report is the proposal that the right to sympathy action should be restricted, as sympathy action probably has a marginal effect, if any, on pay determination generally. The proposed restrictions might, however, have an adverse effect on the coverage of collective agreements, and limit the ability of trade unions to exercise control over businesses whose practices are seen as dubious. This would be a challenge to the basic conditions of the Swedish system. (Kerstin Ahlberg, Arbetslivsinstitutet).

SE9812129F (Related records: SE9811121F, SE9712160N, SE9811122N, SE9704111F)

11 December 1998



## Commission tables draft Directive on national information and consultation

On 11 November 1998, the European Commission issued a proposal for a Directive "establishing a general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community".

The possibility of an EU-level framework for national employee information and consultation was raised in the Commission's 1995 medium-term Social Action Programme, and calls for EU legislative action became louder after the closure of the Renault plant at Vilvoorde in Belgium (*EIRObserver* 2/97 p.2), which was seen by some to have demonstrated the inadequacies of current EU legislation in this area. In June 1997, the Commission initiated a first round of consultations of the European-level social partners on the advisability of legislation on this matter, under the procedure laid down in the Maastricht social policy Agreement. In November 1997, the Commission opened a second round of consultations on the content of possible EU legislation on this issue.

The social partners had an opportunity at this stage to attempt to negotiate a framework agreement, thus forestalling a draft Directive. The Commission expressed a clear preference for such an agreement. However, while the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and the European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest (CEEPE) were willing to negotiate, the Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe (UNICE) was opposed and in March 1998 rejected joining such talks (*EIRObserver* 3/98 p.9). The Commission was still hopeful of social partner action in this area and set another deadline for a decision on negotiations. However, on 16 October, the UNICE council of presidents again declined to enter into negotiations (*EIRObserver* 6/98 p.9).

On 11 November, the Commission tabled its proposal for a Directive. The basic approach is that undertakings with at least 50 employees would be obliged to inform and consult their employees (both information and consultation are carefully defined). The procedures for implementing the information and consultation requirements could be laid down by agreements between the social partners at any appropriate level, including undertaking level. If there were no such agreement, information and consultation should cover:

1) the recent and "reasonably foreseeable" development of the undertaking's activities and its economic and financial situation;

2) the situation, structure and reasonably foreseeable developments of employment in the undertaking and, where employment may be under threat, the anticipatory measures envisaged, in particular in relation to employee training and skill development, with a view to offsetting the potentially negative impact by increasing the "employability" of staff affected (Member States could exclude undertakings with under 100 employees from the information and consultation requirements on these issues); and

3) decisions likely to lead to substantial changes in work organisation or in contractual relations, including transfers of undertakings.

Member States should provide for "appropriate measures" in the event of non-compliance with the Directive, adequate procedures to be enforced, and adequate penalties in the event of its infringement (which must be "effective, proportionate and dissuasive").

In the event of a "serious breach" by the employer of the information and consultation obligations relating to substantial changes in work organisation or contractual relations, where such decisions would have "direct and immediate consequences in terms of substantial change or termination of the employment contracts or employment relationships", these decisions would have no legal effect on the employment contracts or employment relationships of the employees affected. The "non-production of legal effects" would continue until such time as the employer had fulfilled its obligations or, if this were no longer possible, adequate redress had been established.

As might be expected, UNICE has strongly criticised the draft Directive, while ETUC has welcomed it (though with specific criticisms), as has CEEP.

EU9812135F (Related records: EU9704118F, EU9706132F, EU9711160N, EU9810133N)  
11 December 1998

## Sectoral social dialogue developments

Recent months have seen a number of notable new joint texts agreed in the context of the social dialogue at European sectoral level.

In the **postal services** sector, the social partners - CI and Eurofedop on the trade union side and representatives of public and private sector operators from the different Member States on the employers' side - formally signed a framework agreement on the promotion of employment in the sector on 29 October 1998 (though not all employers' representatives supported the text). In the context of the threat to employment

brought by liberalisation, restructuring and new technologies, the agreement aims to:

- improve working conditions;
- boost consultation; and
- ensure that jobs and organisations adapt to meet the changing requirements of users and technology.

The accord sets out measures to help guarantee lasting employment in the sector and also deals with: equality and non-discrimination; work environment; "social minimum standards"; consultation and bargaining on changes in work organisation and working conditions; the future development of the European dialogue; and support for studies and analysis of the factors involved in new work organisation.

At a December 1998 meeting, the European social partners in the **sugar industry** - ECF-IUF for the unions and CEFS for the employers - signed a joint declaration on vocational training. The text aims to encourage the development of transferable vocational skills and to foster the integration of young people into the labour market. The social partners commit themselves to conducting an annual review of training developments and to assessing whether any new measures which have been implemented have been successful. The declaration is seen as a contribution to the current European employment strategy.

Also in December 1998, the social partners in the **cleaning industry** - Euro-FIET for unions and EFCI for employers - signed a joint declaration calling for an end to undeclared work in the sector.

Euro-FIET and EFCI have long been concerned with the major problem of undeclared work, which is seen to be damaging to the interests of both employers and employees. Individuals working in the "underground" economy do not benefit from employment or social protection and have no access to training or career structures. Illegal work is perceived to: undermine market opportunities for private companies by depressing prices; tarnish the public perception of the industry; and deprive the state of receipts from business activities. The new joint text calls for concrete measures to be taken at Member State level to curb illegal work, for example through a reduction of VAT on domestic cleaning services. The declaration stresses the importance of encouraging businesses to operate across the EU by simplifying employment and operational rules. Euro-FIET and EFCI pledge to work closely with local, national and EU bodies to identify problem areas, to encourage vocational training of workers and to monitor progress in fighting illegal work.

A letter announcing the joint declaration was sent to the Labour and Social Affairs Council of Ministers, the member of the European Commission responsible for employment and social affairs and the European Council meeting in Vienna on 11-12 December.

EU9812136F, EU9812138N, EU9812137N  
18 December 1998

**DENMARK/NEWS**  
**Transport employers' organisations amalgamate**

From 1 January 1999, the Danish Haulage Contractors' Employers' Association (VA), the Danish Road Haulage Association (DV) and the Association of Danish Export Hauliers (FDE) are gathered in a single organisation. The background to the amalgamation was a debate on how to ensure optimal safeguarding of both industrial policy interests and employers' policy interests in the road transport sector. The three organisations' executive committees agreed that the strongest possible position in the area of employers' policy would be achieved by an overall affiliation to the Employers' Federation for Trade, Transport and Service (AHTS). AHTS is the second-largest organisation affiliated to the Danish Employers' Confederation (DA), and represents companies whose payroll makes up 8% of the total of firms in the area covered by DA. To handle the transport sector's industrial policy interests, a brand-new organisation has been created, Danish Transport and Logistics (DTL). DTL is not affiliated to AHTS, which is strictly an employers' federation.

The 1998 collective bargaining round and the resulting general industrial dispute in the private sector (*EIRO*observer 4/98 p.3) indicated that the structure of Danish employers' organisations is in need of adjustments if DA is to be able to continue to function as an overall bargaining coordinator. DA's largest member organisation, the Confederation of Danish Industries (DI), has become so large - with 52% of the total payroll of the companies in the area covered by DA - that the structure has arguably become unbalanced. These circumstances put the amalgamation of the employers' organisations in the transport sector into perspective.

With a new single employers' federation, the haulage trade will have an overall, uniform set of collective agreements and, furthermore, individual firms of hauliers will be better protected financially in industrial dispute situations and will constitute a joint bargaining force in relation to their main counterpart, the General Workers' Union (SiD). In SiD, the new organisation is also regarded as an advantage, even though it strengthens the employer side and makes it difficult

to play the employers off against each other. In Denmark's relatively centralised bargaining system, it is an advantage for both parties in transport to have a large overall collective agreement area, which will act as a counterweight to the dominant industrial area, although it may not be able to match it.

The long-term perspective, which has gradually acquired increasing attention among employers, is an amalgamation of AHTS with DA's third-largest member organisation, Danish Commerce and Service (DHS), which covers some 7.5% of the payroll in the DA area. This would result in the creation of a new "central organisation for the service sector", which could cover both industrial policy interests and employer policy interests and which, in DA, could match the largest organisation, DI, to a much greater extent.

DK9812100N (Related records: DK9806175N, DK9805168F, DK9807178F)  
18 December 1998

**FRANCE/NEWS**  
**Committee created for social dialogue on European and international issues**

A decree published on 30 November 1998 established a Committee for Social Dialogue on European and International Issues, overseen by the Minister for Labour and Employment. The role of the Committee is:

- information and consultation of the social partners on work in progress in the areas of labour, employment, vocational training and social affairs within the EU and other relevant international organisations;
- involvement of the social partners in all stages of coordinating the employment policy introduced by the November 1997 European Council "Employment Summit" in Luxembourg (*EIRO*observer 1/98 p.12); and
- consultation of the social partners on "broad economic policy guidelines."

The committee - chaired by a qualified person - is appointed by decree for a three-year period and composed of:

- permanent representatives of the Minister of Labour (and those of other ministers, depending on the agenda);
- eight trade union representatives - two each from CGT, CFDT and CGT-FO and one each from CFTC and CFE-CGC; and
- eight employers' representatives - two from MEDEF (as CNPF has recently been relabelled) and one each from public companies, CGPME (representing SMEs), UPA (crafts), FNSEA (farmers) UNAPL (self-employed) and CNMCCA (mutual insurers, cooperatives and agricultural credit unions).

The committee must meet before each session of the European Council or the EU Council of Labour and Social Affairs Ministers. The committee may also be convened at other times by the chair.

An initial extraordinary meeting of the Committee - at which the Prime Minister, Lionel Jospin, was present - was held on 3 December, in preparation for the European Council summit in Vienna on 11-12 December, part of which was given over to discussions on employment. The Prime Minister argued strongly that "employment levels within the EU should be compared in order" to ensure "quantified" monitoring of National Action Plans on employment. For the unions, Louis Viannet of CGT stated that "investment and consumer spending" should be encouraged - in particular using "major works projects". Nicole Notat (CFDT) stated that the "underlying issue" of European construction was now "a political and a social one". Marc Blondel (CGT-FO) stressed that the EU economic convergence criteria should be more "flexible to allow for a more proactive jobs policy". Georges Jollès of MEDEF, on the other hand, regretted that no agenda had been set prior to the meeting and that the time allotted to each delegation had been extremely limited.

FR9812149N (Related records: FR9805107F, EU9812141N, EU9711168F, FR9811140F)  
18 December 1998

**GERMANY/NEWS**  
**Tripartite agreement establishes national "alliance for jobs"**

Following the election of a Social Democrat-led "red-green" government in September 1998 (see p. 6), a small circle of leading representatives of the government, trade unions (DGB, IG Metall, IG BCE, ÖTV and DAG) and employers' and business associations (BDA, BDI, DIHT and ZHD) met officially in December for joint talks. The parties agreed to establish a new national "alliance for jobs", taking the form of a permanent tripartite body. The results of the meeting were set out on 7 December in a "joint declaration of the alliance for jobs, vocational training and competitiveness", which describes the parties' common goals and contains concrete plans on how to organise the further work of the tripartite alliance.

All parties agreed that a positive development of the labour market requires permanent cooperation between the state, trade unions and employers' and business associations. Therefore the "alliance for jobs" should be constituted as a joint tripartite body, where all parties have the opportunity for a regular exchange of views and for the mediation of different interests.

According to the joint declaration, the parties involved have already reached an agreement on the following aims:

- a permanent reduction of non-wage labour costs and a structural reform of the social security system;
- an employment-promoting distribution of work and flexible working time arrangements (eg reduction of overtime, use of working time accounts and promotion of part-time work);
- a reform of company taxes with particular tax reductions for SMEs until 1 January 2000;
- the improvement of innovative capacity and the competitiveness of companies;
- the creation of better possibilities to use early and partial retirement;
- a collective bargaining policy which supports the creation of employment;
- better possibilities for SMEs to obtain risk capital;
- the improvement of wealth-creating and profit-sharing schemes;
- the establishment of tripartite talks on particular topics;
- the development of new fields of employment for low-skilled workers; and
- the extension of labour market policy to fight youth and long-term unemployment.

For the discussion and further development of these goals, it was agreed to establish eight working groups which will be made up of experts from all sides and deal with the following topics:

- 1) "vocational and continued training", chaired by the Minister of Training, Edelgard Buhlmann;
- 2) "tax policy", chaired by the Minister of Finance, Oskar Lafontaine;
- 3) "reform of pension schemes", chaired by the Minister of Labour, Walter Riester;
- 4) "early and partial retirement", chaired by the Minister of Labour;
- 5) "working time policy", chaired by the Minister of Labour;
- 6) "reform of health and care insurance", chaired by the Minister of Health, Andrea Fischer;
- 7) "economic development in east Germany", chaired by undersecretary Rolf Schwanzitz; and
- 8) "benchmarking", chaired by the Minister for the Chancellor, Bodo Hombach.

The working group on "benchmarking" should elaborate a common set of socio-economic data and analysis on which all parties can agree. All working groups start their work in January 1999. The next meeting of the core group of top-

level representatives was due to be held on 25 February.

DE9812286N (Related record: DE9811281F)  
18 December 1998

**GREECE/NEWS**  
**General strike in public and private sectors over new Budget**

The Confederation of Public Servants (ADEDY) and the Greek General Confederation of Labour (GSEE) called a 24-hour nationwide general strike on 15 December 1998. The strike reportedly caused widespread disruption, notably in transport, education, healthcare and finance. In official statements, both union organisations cited taxation issues, incomes policy and social expenditure as the strike's basic demands. The confederations called the action to coincide with the parliamentary vote on the 1999 Budget, enabling public and private sector workers to both demonstrate opposition to overall government policy, and press union demands on the Budget.

As regards taxes, GSEE is demanding fairer tax regulations and tax cuts for wage-earners and pensioners, and is asking the government to implement a number of measures to which it has committed itself:

- an increase in tax-exempt income for wage-earners and pensioners to an amount equal to the annual wages of an unskilled worker (about GRD 2 million - EUR 6,200);
- indexation of the tax scale; and
- a sliding scale of taxes.

On incomes policy, GSEE is demanding that the rationale of austerity be abandoned and that the government abide by its announced intention to protect and increase workers' real incomes.

According to GSEE, the December strike was designed to be a message to all sides that workers will further their pay demands in all branches and companies through collective bargaining. Their minimum demand will be the rates set out in the two-year National General Collective Labour Agreement signed by GSEE for 1998 and 1999. As for social expenditure, GSEE is demanding that outlays be increased to correspond to the need to pursue an effective social policy, mainly with regard to measures concerning unemployed people and the groups in a socially weaker position.

ADEDY's framework of demands is focused on incomes policy. In its strike announcement, ADEDY stated that the 1999 Budget has been determined solely by the EMU convergence programme of the Greek economy to achieve nominal indices, relying for its revenues on taxes paid by wage earners and pensioners, and ignoring heightened social pro-

blems. ADEDY claims that, instead of paying a corrective amount to offset lower wages in 1998 brought about both by incomes policy and high taxation, the government - with its announced 2% incomes policy and its Budget proposals - is shifting the whole burden of its anti-inflationary policy onto workers and is causing public sector workers to suffer a loss of income for the second year running.

GR9812113N (Related records: GR9805171N, GR9810195F)  
18 December 1998

**IRELAND/NEWS**  
**"Partnership" deals - signposts to the future?**

Over 20 "partnership"-style agreements were reported in detail in the independent Dublin-based publication, *Industrial Relations News* (IRN), over the two years up until November 1998. These vary considerably in scope and ambition, but all have some aspirations towards the realisation of the partnership idea as spelled out in *Partnership 2000* (P2000), Ireland's current three-year agreement between the social partners at national level (*EIRObserver* 1/97 p.6).

Many of the cases include one or more of the type of issues considered "appropriate for discussion" at enterprise level in chapter 9 of P2000, such as: "employee involvement for competitiveness"; "training, personal development and support"; "equality of opportunities"; "representational arrangements"; "forms of financial involvement"; "occupational health and safety in the work environment"; "composition of the workforce"; "co-operation with change including new forms of work organisation"; "problem solving"; and "conflict avoidance and adaptability, flexibility and innovation".

The forms of financial involvement referred to have included: additional remuneration (ie pay increases in addition to those agreed nationally in P2000); gainsharing and profitsharing; skill-based pay; and changes in "fringe" benefits. Other key items include: "World Class Manufacturing"; team-working; and joint management/union working parties on specific issues.

The 21 companies featured in IRN are: ABS Pumps; Avery Dennison; Basta Hardware; Bausch & Lomb; Boxmore Plastics; Braun (I); Ezy Koter; Flair International; Harris (I); Harty Steeline; Habsbro; Henniges Elastomers; Howmedica (*EIRObserver* 1/98 p.14); Lapple; Norton; Olympus Diagnostica; SIFA; Taconic; Tarkett; Union Camp and Wessell Cable.

In some cases, the agreements refer directly to P2000 and its largely aspirational chapter on partnership, entitled

Action through partnership for competitive enterprises. The broad definition given of "partnership" in P2000 is as follows:

"Partnership is an active relationship based on recognition of a common interest to secure the competitiveness, viability and prosperity of the enterprise. It involves a continuing commitment by employees to improvements in quality and efficiency; and the acceptance by employers of employees as stake holders with rights and interests to be considered in the context of major decisions affecting their employment."

"Partnership involves common ownership of the resolution of challenges, involving the direct participation of employees/representatives and an investment in their training, development and working environment."

Assessing the quality of the partnership in the 21 agreements is difficult at such an early stage. The sort of areas considered "appropriate for discussion" in P2000 often involve an aspirational element, which can only be fully tested over time. However, it would appear that a genuine effort is being made by management and employee representatives to push forward and realise partnership-based strategies.

IE9811264N (Related records: IE9702103F, IE9802242N, IE9711236N, IE9807120F)  
27 November 1998

#### LUXEMBOURG/NEWS

##### "Social election" results

November 1998 saw the "social elections" of employee representatives in Luxembourg, with workers voting for their employee committees/works councils (délégations du personnel), and for representatives in their professional chambers (chambres professionnelles) and on the tripartite bodies which run the various health insurance and pension funds (EIRObserver 6/98 p.12). The results of the elections were announced in December, and there were no great surprises.

The two trade union organisations which are considered "nationally representative" for both blue-collar and white-collar employees in the private sector - the Luxembourg Confederation of Independent Trade Unions (OGB-L) and the Luxembourg Confederation of Christian Trade Unions (LCGB) - won the overwhelming majority of seats on employee committees/works councils: approximately 1,250 for OGB-L and 750 for LCGB. The Luxembourg Association of Bank Staffs (ALEBA), which has traditionally been the main union in the banking sector, maintained this position. The recently formed Confederation of Private Sector White-Collar Employees (CEP) obtained almost 100 seats.

There were no major changes in the election results for professional chambers and sickness funds, except in the bodies for white-collar staff. Here the outcome of the election, in which there was a 41% turnout, was awaited with some interest. As it turned out, seats in the private sector white-collar employees' professional chamber will henceforward be distributed as follows: OGB-L - 12; LCGB - nine; ALEBA - six; CEP - three; and the Union of Private Sector White-Collar Employees (JEP) - two. In the special "transport" group, the distribution of seats is: the National Federation of Railway and Transport Workers (FNCTTFEL) - four; and the Christian Transport Workers' Trade Union (SYPROLUX) - two.

The troubled Federation of Private Sector White-Collar Employees (FEP) - until now regarded as having nationally representative status for private sector white-collar workers - lost its final bastion when it failed to win a single seat on the body administering the pension fund for private sector white-collar staff. Seats on this fund will now be distributed as follows: OGB-L - five; LCGB - four; ALEBA - three; and CEP - three.

It may now be that CEP - which, unlike ALEBA, is not an exclusively sectoral organisation - will achieve nationally representative status for private sector white-collar workers.

LU9812185N (Related records: LU9810172F, LU9805162N)  
18 December 1998

#### NETHERLANDS/NEWS

##### KPN Telecom redundancy plan accepted

In late November 1998, Dutch trade unions signed an agreement with KPN Telecom on the company's redundancy plan covering its forthcoming reorganisation, which could result in the loss of up to 4,000 jobs. One of the business units to be hit hardest by the reorganisation, the company's telephone information service, is facing closure of 12 of its 18 departments. KPN is planning to concentrate the division's activities in a smaller number of branches.

Temporary employees will be most affected by the changes: 700 of the 800 temporary positions currently filled at the telephone information service will disappear before 2001. The consequences for permanent staff appear less dramatic: the number of jobs will be cut back from 1,100 to 850, and measures will be taken to compensate for most of the associated social consequences. The unions do not expect compulsory redundancies amongst permanent staff, in view of the fact that the company has stopped recruiting external staff. Permanent staff will also receive help in finding new jobs over the coming two years. However, this does not mean an

end to all the problems: most of the staff at the telephone information service are female employees working on a part-time basis. It remains to be seen whether these employees will be eligible for other positions within the group.

Union reactions to the agreement have been mixed. Employees are concerned mainly that the possibility of compulsory redundancies has not been ruled out. The agreement was rejected at two regional meetings, but on 18 December the majority of the members of the relevant unions affiliated to the FNV and CNV confederations accepted a slightly amended plan.

The KPN reorganisation came at the same time that a number of other major companies - including Philips, Shell and Baan - announced substantial restructuring and job losses, the causes of which varied widely. FNV called for the cabinet to take measures to address the situation, though the VNO-NCW employers' confederation viewed this reaction as being out of proportion. Some commentators speculated that such developments might damage the Dutch system of social partnership and consultation (the so-called "polder model").

NL9812114N (Related record: NL9811106F)  
18 December 1998

#### NORWAY/NEWS

##### Agreement strengthens cooperation on incomes policy

A conference on incomes policy was held on 16-17 December 1998, involving representatives from social partner organisations as well as the government. The main issues on the conference agenda were the economic situation and the institutional framework for cooperation on incomes policy. The participants at the conference were those organisations represented on the government's "contact committee" on incomes policy - ie the main trade union confederations and the largest employers' organisations.

The purpose of the conference was to revitalise cooperation on incomes policy. Yngve Hågensen, the leader of the Norwegian Confederation of Trade Unions (LO), had expressed in November 1998 a wish to create a new commission to consider the questions of employment and cooperation on incomes policy. The Prime Minister, Kjell Magne Bondevik, gave his support for the proposal. Erling Steensnæs, parliamentary leader of the Prime Minister's party, the Christian Democratic Party, had proposed as early as in the summer of 1998 the establishment of a similar body. The proposal received only limited support at the time.

The labour market parties came to an agreement with the government on the establishment of several committees,

which will work to secure moderate pay settlements and measures to preserve high employment. The government's wish to establish a committee to consider changes to the provisions in the Working Environment Act was also discussed during the conference. The conference decided to set up three committees:

- 1) an ad-hoc committee to deliberate the basis for the 1999 pay settlement. The committee will, among other things, work the current continuing vocational training reform into the 1999 pay settlement;
- 2) a long-term committee with a view to contributing to full employment; and
- 3) an ad-hoc committee which will consider the institutional framework for collective bargaining and cooperation on incomes policy between the government and the labour market parties.

The committees' terms of reference and composition will be settled some time in early 1999. It is expected that all the main organisations on the employee and employer sides will be represented on the committees, which means a broader representative base than the last time a public committee on employment issues was established.

NO9812117N (Related records: NO9811101N, NO9810193N, NO9812103F)  
18 December 1998

**PORTUGAL/NEWS**  
**"Self-service" doctors strike continues**

In December 1998, it was announced that the industrial action called by the Independent Union of Doctors (SIM) in August-September 1998 until the end of the year had once again been extended, this time until January 2000. The extension is due to what the SIM calls a lack of response to its demands. The strike is directed against the public health administration, with doctors working a full 35-hour weekly workload demanding to be paid at the "index rate" of 100, whether or not they work exclusively for the state. Another doctors' union, the National Federation of Doctors (FNAM), had negotiated a revaluation of the salary scale index with the Ministry of Health during the summer, but SIM left the negotiating table and called for strikes.

The industrial action organised by SIM is known as a "self-service" strike, due to its unusual nature. In Portugal, strikes are normally preceded by advance notification. In this case, the SIM has called a strike in which the doctors can strike individually at any given time. Any doctor, whether or not a member of the union, may join in the strike.

According to the public health administration, adherence to the self-service strike in October 1998 was between 2%

and 6% daily. Operating theatres, particularly in Lisbon and Oporto, and some specialities such as anaesthesia were hardest hit. According to the press, the number of surgeries in some hospitals dropped by 34.4% in October and by even more in certain specialities.

The doctors' strike has captured the attention of the media not only because of its nature but also because of the impact it has had on the population, given the long waiting lists for health services. In general, participation the strike has been low but, given the unpredictability of this type of action, it has had serious consequences for patients.

Questions have arisen as to whether the self-service strike falls within the correct legal boundaries for a strike. Some specialists in constitutional law have pronounced the strike illegal because of its unpredictability. Meanwhile, the Minister of Health has talked of re-opening negotiations but has not mentioned the possibility of a "civil conscription" back-to-work order. According to the doctors, minimum essential services are being provided. Surgical interventions are being performed on an emergency basis and others are being evaluated case by case. There is great concern about the situation and the President of the Republic has issued an appeal to resolve the conflict

PT9812118N (Related record: PT9809196N)  
18 December 1998

**SPAIN/NEWS**  
**Flexibility in exchange for jobs at SEAT**

The management of the SEAT car factory in Martorell wishes to put the plant forward as the best location for the production of a new SEAT model (a shorter version of the Toledo). In order to obtain the approval of Volkswagen (VW), SEAT's parent company, management claimed that it was "vital" to reach a pact with the trade unions to guarantee the necessary increase in production. Management believes that accepting the production of this model will lead to the consolidation of the plant in the medium and long term, because it would mean taking on again the production of SEAT's own models and would also compensate for a possible reduction in production of VW models. The new model is also a car with greater added value, which means greater profitability. The planned increase in production is between 35,000 and 50,000 units per year (at present, 200,000 units are produced).

The production of this model, which is expected to begin in mid-1999, involves an increase in production at a factory whose workers are already working at full capacity. The solution proposed by the company is to increase the use of the

plant and this requires greater flexibility in working hours.

Negotiations over an agreement on increased production lasted several months and suffered their ups and downs. They were also held at a time of trade union elections that caused divisions amongst the union sections (even internally). However, in the first week of November 1998, management and the majority trade unions, CC.OO and UGT, reached an agreement, with the opposition of CGT.

Management agrees to:

- convert 600 temporary workers recruited two years ago into permanent workers;
- recruit 350 new workers;
- recruit another 100 temporary workers (students) on a part-time basis to cover weekends and holidays; and
- set up two commissions to analyse the feasibility of an early retirement plan and an occupational regrading plan.

In return the unions have agreed to:

- increase the holiday period by one month, from July to September, with the company paying ESP 6,000 (EUR 36) more per day to workers who take their holidays outside the normal holiday period;
- increase shifts on Saturdays. The same number of Saturdays will be worked but on a three-shift pattern, with five Saturdays paid as overtime and eight as normal hours, and a bonus of ESP 1,100 (EUR 6.60) per day, plus one extra day off;
- work more days per year, by not compensating accumulated hours worked the previous year and continuing to work 80 hours of overtime per worker; and
- reduce by 15% the wages of new recruits graded as "specialists", in exchange for a reduction in the period of service necessary to enter a higher grade (from three to two years).

The pact involves greater security for many workers and the net creation of both permanent and temporary jobs. However, commentators have pointed out that it does not reflect union concerns of reducing overtime and working hours (the 35-hour week).

ES9811288N  
27 November 1998

**UNITED KINGDOM/NEWS**  
**Flexible working arrangements agreed at Rover**

On 11 December 1998, it was announced that a ballot of union members at Rover, the motor manufacturer, had overwhelmingly endorsed an agreement

negotiated between management and union officials involving 2,500 job losses and more flexible working hours. The changes had been sought by Rover's German parent company, BMW, as the price for new investment in Rover and keeping open the Longbridge production plant in Birmingham which employs around 14,000 people. BMW management maintained that a 30% productivity gap existed between the Longbridge plant and BMW plants in Germany, which had to be narrowed by means of more flexible working practices.

The company estimates that the agreement will lead to cost savings of around GBP 150 million (EUR 215 million) a year. About half of this will come from the reduction in the workforce headcount. The requisite number of job losses will come through "natural wastage" and voluntary, rather than compulsory, redundancies. The most radical aspect of the deal is the introduction of new German-style working patterns to extend plant operating hours at basic rates of pay. Workers' basic hours would be cut from 37 to 35 hours a week - a long-standing union objective in the UK engineering sector - but management will be able to schedule these more flexibly, including on Saturday morning if necessary. Annualised working time accounts are to be introduced in all Rover plants, under which extra hours worked at peak periods of production are "banked" and taken as additional leave at quieter times. This practice is already used in BMW's German plants. Savings derive from the elimination of premium payments for overtime and Saturday working.

Elsewhere in the UK, car manufacturing companies have been experiencing contrasting fortunes.

Peugeot announced in November that it plans to create 900 new jobs at its Ryton plant near Coventry. The French-owned company is planning to introduce a third shift to meet high demand for its new 206 model. The new shift will work every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and is thought to be the first weekend-only shift to be introduced in the UK motor industry. Flexible working hours arrangements similar to those just agreed at Rover already apply at Peugeot.

Meanwhile, Ford's Dagenham plant is to continue with four-day-per-week production because of low demand in continental Europe. Employees are switched to training or maintenance work on non-production days. US-owned Ford is now expected to pursue a Rover-type flexible working hours deal with its UK employees.

UK9812168N (Related record: UK9809148F)  
18 December 1998

**TRANSNATIONAL/NEWS****French and German unions respond to Hoechst/Rhône-Poulenc merger**

On 1 December 1998, the German-owned Hoechst and the French-owned Rhône-Poulenc began a merger process which should lead to the creation of the world's second largest pharmaceuticals group. The two companies will firstly take an equal stake in the creation of a joint company (headquartered in France) called Aventis which will bring the "life-science" operations of both companies - ie pharmaceuticals, plant and animal health - under one umbrella. Following a transition period, Hoechst and Rhône-Poulenc will conclude their merger over "the subsequent three or four years," during which time each company will sell off its chemicals operations. The merger will be put before the companies' respective general meetings, to be held in mid-1999 after the legal procedures have been fulfilled and the approval of the various authorities concerned have been obtained.

Trade unions representing the groups' French employees are concerned about the social and employment implications of the merger. The lack of official figures for resulting job losses and plant closures has given them cause for concern. The unions fear that in France, between 3,000 and 4,000 of the combined workforce of 35,000 could be axed at both Rhône-Poulenc and Hoechst (which already has a strong presence in France).

The French union reaction was characterised by a failure to respond jointly. The largest union at Rhône-Poulenc, CGT - with approximately 35% of the votes in workplace elections - stated that it would "do its utmost" to scuttle the merger. The union says that the merger "is tantamount to an attempt by Hoechst to seize control of Rhône-Poulenc's pharmaceuticals and agro-chemicals sectors" and is therefore "a disguised takeover bid". The general secretary of CGT's National Federation of Chemical Industries stated that "the takeover of the number-one French pharmaceutical company raises the question of our national independence in the health sector."

At the transnational level, the merger gave rise to a first-ever joint declaration between the Chemical and Energy Federation (FCE) affiliated to the French CFDT union confederation - which won 30% of the votes at the last Rhône-Poulenc workplace elections - and the German Mining, Chemical and Energy Workers' Union, (IG BCE).

In a joint statement on 2 December, both unions "acknowledged" the decision made by the two companies to begin the merger process. However, the unions expressed concern about per-

ceived "research and development and management-quality problems experienced by both companies". They further stated that, in their opinion, "two weaknesses do not make one strength, no more so than trying to achieve economies of scale is enough to determine industrial strategy." The unions stated that "both workers and their representatives were excluded from a choice that decides their future. This lack emphasises once again the urgent need for the European Union to define the rights and obligations of European companies in terms of informing employees."

In the opinion of IG BCE and FCE CFDT, "the success of the merger will depend to a large extent on its ability to motivate and involve" the employees. The two unions have set themselves the following goals:

- to reject redundancies and any deterioration of working conditions;
- to upgrade equipment and staff in production, research, development and sales; and
- to maintain the co-determination system for the new company's German workers and to improve the industrial relations arrangements for French workers in this direction.

This declaration was distributed in both French and German (one side of the document in German and the other in French) in all of the two companies' plants on both sides of the Rhine.

FR9812146F  
11 December 1998

**TRANSNATIONAL/NEWS****Rail workers hold European day of action**

On 23 November 1998, railway workers in a number of European countries took part in a day of action, coordinated by the Federation of Transport Workers' Unions in the European Union (FST), in protest against EU plans to liberalise the rail sector, and specifically against a recent decision to open the rail freight market to competition. In a number of countries, the day of action was also used to highlight specific national concerns about privatisation and liberalisation. For example: in Portugal, the day of action included a strike which stopped all trains for one hour and affected rail traffic for four hours; in Spain, a well-supported 24-hour rail strike was held (though minimum services were, somewhat controversially, maintained by government decree); and in Greece, a 24-hour strike was held on the entire network (as part of a series of actions in protest against government plans to restructure services).

PT9811111N, ES9812293N, GR9812115N  
18 December 1998

## EIROOnline - the Observatory's database on the Web

*EIROOnline, the European Industrial Relations Observatory's database is accessible to the public on the World-Wide Web. Here we provide information for EIROObserver readers on how to use EIROOnline*

EIROObserver contains a small edited selection of the records supplied to the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) by its network of national centres in the EU Member States (plus Norway) and its European-level centre. Each month, a comprehensive set of reports on key developments in industrial relations across Europe is submitted by the network, edited technically and for style and content, and loaded onto the EIROOnline database. EIROOnline is available via a site on the World-Wide Web.

### Getting started

To make use of EIROOnline, you require Internet access and browser software - EIROOnline is best viewed with Netscape Navigator or Microsoft Internet Explorer versions 3 and above. Simply go to the URL address of our home page:

<http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie/>

This will bring you to the EIRO home page. EIRO's central operation is based on a monthly cycle, with national centres submitting news and features on the main issues and events in a calendar month towards the end of that month. These records are processed, edited and then uploaded from the middle of the next month. Thus, records relating to events in November, for example, will appear on the website from mid-December.

The home page indicates the last time that EIROOnline was updated and provides direct links to the most recently added records. These are designated as either features, news or studies, with the titles in blue lettering, underlined. Whenever you see such blue (or green) underlined text in EIROOnline, this indicates that clicking on the text will link you to further information. In the top left-hand corner of the home page, and of every page of EIROOnline, there is a blue and black EIROOnline logo. Clicking on this will always return you to the home page.

To the left of the home page is a list of links to additional facilities - **about EIRO**, **register**, **help**, **feedback**, **EIROObserver**, **contacts**, **related sites** and **EMIRE** (the online version of the European Employment and Industrial Relations Glossaries).

Along the top of the home page there is the **EIROOnline navigation bar** containing four links: **news** connects to a list of the news items for the current month,

and **features** to a list of that month's feature items; **site map** connects to a variety of ways of browsing EIROOnline records; and **search** connects to an EIROOnline search engine.

### News and features

The basic content of EIRO consists of news and feature records. News items are short factual article about a significant event or issue in industrial relations in the country concerned. Features also set out the facts, but they are longer, allowing more detail and a commentary ("signed" by the author(s)) to be included. Features cover the most significant developments, activities and issues, and those which can benefit most from a greater degree of analysis and background. From the home page, clicking on **news** or **features** on the **EIROOnline navigation bar** connects to lists of the news and features for the most recent month - an ideal form of browsing for users who want quick access to the most up-to-date records.

### Site map

The **site map** - accessible from the **EIROOnline navigation bar** on every EIROOnline page - is the most useful starting point for browsing the contents of the database.

The site map provides a list of all countries covered by EIRO, plus the EU level. Clicking on any of the **country** names connects to a full list of all the records submitted for that country. It is also simple to navigate by **date**: each month since EIRO started collecting data in February 1997 is listed, and clicking on a particular month connects to an editorial page highlighting key events and issues, and from there provides access to all the month's records.

To follow up a story in EIROObserver, and read the full text of the original record(s) on which it is based, the easiest way is to input the record's unique **record ID** (eg SE9704111F), which is provided at the end of each item in EIROObserver (along with the IDs of related records). Type the ID into the field alongside Record ID in the site map, and click the **search** button to connect directly with the record.

Those interested in information on particular organisations will find the **organisations** facility useful. Clicking on **index** connects you to a list of all the EIRO countries, plus the EU level, and an alphabetical list of letters. Clicking on any country will connect to a list of all the significant organisations mentioned in records referring to that country, and clicking on the name of any organisation provides a list (with links) of all the records in which it is mentioned. The

alphabetical list sets out all the organisations mentioned in EIROOnline, and again provides links to relevant records.

The site map also provides a chronological list (with links) of all the **comparative studies** produced by EIRO. These focus on one particular topical issue in industrial relations and its treatment across the countries covered by EIRO.

### Searching

The most sophisticated way of finding information in EIROOnline is to use the **search** option - accessible from the **EIROOnline navigation bar** on every EIROOnline page. EIRO uses the powerful Muscat search engine and offers users three types of search - **free text**, **advanced** and **thesaurus**. Before starting to search, it is strongly recommended that you click on **help**, which connects to useful tips on how to conduct all three types of search.

### Feedback

A fuller users' guide was published in EIROObserver 1/98 p.2 and is available on EIROOnline under the **help** facility. However, a written guide to a website/database is only ever of limited use, and EIROObserver readers are urged to gain access to EIROOnline itself, in order to experience how it works and what it offers. EIROOnline is still being developed and improved continuously (some features are not yet fully operational), and we welcome the views, comments and queries of users in order to feed into this process. As well as the **feedback** form available on the website itself, please send any input about EIROOnline, by e-mail to [eiroinfo@eiro.eurofound.ie](mailto:eiroinfo@eiro.eurofound.ie).

### Links in EIROOnline records

There are three types of link within the text of EIRO records, all of which are identified as "clickable" links by appearing in blue (or green) underlined text:

\* internal EIROOnline links. These are the titles and IDs of other relevant records on the EIROOnline database, which appear in brackets. Clicking on them connects to the relevant record. To return to the original record, click on the browser's **back** button;

\* links to EMIRE glossaries. These links consist of relevant words in the text which connect to a definition in the EMIRE glossaries of the organisation, structure, process etc concerned. To return to the original record, close the box which has appeared with the EMIRE definition in it; and

\* external links. These are links to material on websites outside EIROOnline which is relevant to the record - such as a law, agreement, report or other useful information. To return to the original record, close the page which has appeared with the external material in it.

**EIRObserver**

ISSN 1028 0588, Issue 1/99

**EIRObserver** is published by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. It is the regular information newsletter of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO). Enquiries about EIRO should be made to the EIRO Unit, tel: +353 1 204 3100, fax: +353 1 282 6545, e-mail: [eiroinfo@eiro.eurofound.ie](mailto:eiroinfo@eiro.eurofound.ie)

Editor: Mark Carley

Consultant editors: Colin Gill, Michael Gold

Production: Sylvie Seigné-Monks, Eoin Campbell

Typeset and printed by Printset and Design Ltd, Dublin

The European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions is an autonomous body of the European Union. It was established by a regulation of the EC Council of Ministers of 26 May 1975. This regulation was the result of joint deliberations between the social partners, national governments and Community institutions on the ways and means of solving the ever-growing problems associated with improving living and working conditions.

Director: Clive Purkiss

Deputy Director: Eric Verborgh

**EIRO steering committee:** Clive Purkiss, Eric Verborgh, Willy Buschak (ETUC), Jean-Claude Vandermeeren (ETUC), Fritz-Jürgen Kador (BDA), Olivier Richard (UNICE), Nunzia Gava (CEEP), Fernando Cabral (IDICT, Portugal), Cees J Vos (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken, the Netherlands), Gaetano Zingone (DG V, European Commission)

Initial enquiries about other Foundation work should be made to the Information Centre.

European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Wyattville Road, Loughlinstown, Co. Dublin, Ireland, tel: +353 1 204 3100, fax: +353 1 282 6456, e-mail: [postmaster@eurofound.ie](mailto:postmaster@eurofound.ie)

Copyright: European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions. Reproduction is authorised, except for commercial purposes, provided the source is acknowledged and a copy is sent to the Foundation.

The information contained in EIRObserver does not necessarily reflect the position or views of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions or of the organisations represented on the EIRO steering committee.

Printed in Ireland

Cat. No SX-AB-99-001-EN-C

Foundation No. EF/99/05/EN

**THE NATIONAL CENTRES OF EIRO****European Union Level**

ECOTEC Research and Consulting, Avenue de Tervuren 13B, B-1040 Bruxelles and Priestley House, 28-34 Albert Street, Birmingham B4 7UD. Contact: Tina Weber, tel: +44 121 616 3658, fax: +44 121 616 3699, e-mail: [Tina\\_Weber@ECOTEC.co.uk](mailto:Tina_Weber@ECOTEC.co.uk)

**Austria**

Institut für Höhere Studien, Stumpergasse 56, A-1060 Vienna. Contact: August Gächter, tel.: +43 1 599 91-189, fax: +43 1 59991-171, e-mail: [gachter@wsr.ac.at](mailto:gachter@wsr.ac.at)

**Belgium**

Steunpunt WAV, KU Leuven, E van Evenstraat 2B, 3000 Leuven. Contact: Hans Bruyninckx, tel: +32 16 323239, fax: +32 16 323240, e-mail: [hans.bruyninckx@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be](mailto:hans.bruyninckx@hiva.kuleuven.ac.be)

Point d'Appui Travail Emploi Formation (TEF-ULB), Rue de Bruxelles 39, B-1400 Nivelles. Contact: Philippe Dryon, tel: +32 2 650 9117, fax: +32 2 650 9118, e-mail: [appuitem@ulb.ac.be](mailto:appuitem@ulb.ac.be) or Estelle Krzeslo, tel: +32 2 650 3433, fax: +32 2 650 3335, e-mail: [appuitem@ulb.ac.be](mailto:appuitem@ulb.ac.be)

**Denmark**

FAOS, Dept of Sociology, University of Copenhagen, Linnesgarde 22, 1361 K Copenhagen. Contact: Jørgen Steen Madsen, tel: +45 35 32 32 99, fax: +45 35 32 39 40, e-mail: [kare.f.v.petersen@sociology.ku.dk](mailto:kare.f.v.petersen@sociology.ku.dk)

**Finland**

Ministry of Labour, PO. Box 524, Etelaesplanadi 4, FIN 00130 Helsinki. Contact: Juha Hietanen, tel: +358 9 1856 8951, fax: +358 9 1856 8961, e-mail: [juha.hietanen@pt2.tempo.mol.fi](mailto:juha.hietanen@pt2.tempo.mol.fi)

**France**

IREs, 16 boulevard du Mont-d'Est, 93192 Noisy le Grand Cedex. Contact: Alexandre Bilous, tel: +33 1 48 15 19 02, fax: +33 1 48 15 19 18, e-mail: [bilous1@msh-paris.fr](mailto:bilous1@msh-paris.fr)

**Germany**

Institut der deutschen Wirtschaft, Gustav-Heinemann-Ufer 84-88, 50968 Köln. Contact: Stefan Zagelmeyer, tel: +49 221 4981 785, fax: +49 221 4981 594, e-mail: [Zagelmeyer@iwkoeln.de](mailto:Zagelmeyer@iwkoeln.de)

WSI in der HBS, Bertha-von-Suttner-Platz 1, D-40227 Düsseldorf. Contact: Thorsten Schulten, tel: +49 211 77 78 239, fax: +49 211 77 78 250, e-mail: [Thorsten-Schulten@boeckler.de](mailto:Thorsten-Schulten@boeckler.de)

**Greece**

INE-GSEE, Emm. Benaki 71A, 10681 Athens. Contact: Eva Soumeli, tel: +30 1 33 03 718, fax: +30 1 33 04 452, e-mail: [ineobser@otenet.gr](mailto:ineobser@otenet.gr)

**Ireland**

CEROP, Graduate School of Business, University College Dublin, Carysfort Avenue, Blackrock, Co. Dublin. Contact: John Geary, tel: +353 1 706 8974, fax: +353 1 706 8007, e-mail: [geary\\_j@blackrock.ucd.ie](mailto:geary_j@blackrock.ucd.ie)

Industrial Relations News, 121-123 Ranelagh, Dublin 6. Contact: Brian Sheehan, tel: +353 1 497 2711, fax: +353 1 497 2779, e-mail: [irn@iol.ie](mailto:irn@iol.ie)

**Italy**

IREs Lombardia, Via Filizi 33, 20124 Milano. Contact: Marco Trentini, tel: +39 02 6671 4973 / 6698 24 41, fax: +39 02 6698 0834, e-mail: [ireseiro@galactica.it](mailto:ireseiro@galactica.it)

Fondazione Regionale Pietro Seveso, Viale Vittorio Veneto, 24, I-20124 Milano. Contact: Roberto Pedersini, tel: +39 02 290 13 198, fax: +39 02 290 13 262, e-mail: [eiropfrps@tin.it](mailto:eiropfrps@tin.it)

CESOS, VIA PO, 102 - 00198 Roma. Contact: Marta Santi, tel: +39-06-84242070, fax: +39-06-85355360, e-mail: [cesos@mclink.it](mailto:cesos@mclink.it)

**Luxembourg**

ITM, 26 rue Zithe, L-2010, Luxembourg. Contact: Marc Feyereisen, tel: +352 42105 7860, fax: +352 42105 7888, e-mail: [marc.feyereisen@ja.smtp.etat.lu](mailto:marc.feyereisen@ja.smtp.etat.lu)

**Netherlands**

HSI, Faculty of Law, University of Amsterdam, Rokin 84, 1012 KX Amsterdam. Contact: Robbert van het Kaar, tel: +31 20 525 3962 / 3560, fax: +31 20 525 3648, e-mail: [kaar@jur.uva.nl](mailto:kaar@jur.uva.nl)

**Norway**

FAFO Institute for Applied Social Science, PO Box 2947 Toyen, N-0608 Oslo. Contact: Kristine Nergaard, tel: +47 226 760 00, fax: +47 226 760 22, e-mail: [kristine.nergaard@fafo.no](mailto:kristine.nergaard@fafo.no)

**Portugal**

UAL, Palácio dos Condes de Redondo, R De Santa Marta 47, 1150 Lisboa. Contact: Ana Carla Casinhas, tel: +351 1 317 76 73, fax: +351 1 317 76 73, e-mail: [mlc@universidade-autonoma.pt](mailto:mlc@universidade-autonoma.pt)

**Spain**

CIREM, Travessera de les Corts 39-43, lateral 2a planta, E-08028 Barcelona. Contact: Maria Caprile, tel: +349 3 4401000, fax: +349 3 4404560, e-mail: [maria.caprile@cirem.es](mailto:maria.caprile@cirem.es)

QUIT (Grup d'Estudis Sociològics sobre la Vida Quotidiana i el Treball), Departament de Sociologia, Edifici B, Campus Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, Bellaterra 08193, Barcelona. Contact: Clara Llorens, tel: +349 3 581 2405, fax: +349 3 581 24 37, e-mail: [eiro.esp@uab.es](mailto:eiro.esp@uab.es)

**Sweden**

Arbetslivsinstitutet, S-171 84 Solna. Contact: Kerstin Ahlberg, tel: +46 8 730 95 93, fax: +46 8 730 95 01, e-mail: [kerstin.ahlberg@niwl.se](mailto:kerstin.ahlberg@niwl.se)

**United Kingdom**

IRRU, Warwick Business School, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL. Contact: Mark Hall, tel: +44 1203 524278, fax: +44 1203 524184, e-mail: [mark.hall@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:mark.hall@warwick.ac.uk)

**Other Relevant European Commission Observatories**

**Employment Observatory**  
Contact: IAS, Novalisstraße 10, D-10115 Berlin, Germany, tel: +49 302 82 10 47, fax: +49 302 82 6378

**Community information system on social protection (MISSOC)**  
Contact: ISG, Barbarossaplatz 2, D-50674 Cologne, Germany, tel: +49 221 235473, fax: +49 221 215267