

The EU's 'better law-making' obsession

On 19 May, the European Commission will present its new package on 'better regulation' under the title 'Better regulation for better results – an EU agenda'.

For more than ten years now, the 'better' or 'smart' regulation agenda has become a vehicle for deregulation ('cutting red tape') and deconstructing social Europe. The ideological justification behind this agenda is that EU laws undermine the competitiveness of EU businesses and hamper economic growth. From this standpoint, EU legislation is exclusively perceived through the prism of costs for business while its benefits to society and citizens (e.g. in the areas of social and environmental protection) are totally neglected.

The process received new impetus under the Barroso-II Commission with the regulatory 'fitness check' or 'REFIT' initiative and the importance accorded it by the Juncker Commission when the president placed his 'first' vice-president – Frans Timmermans – in charge of the agenda. EU laws of major importance for social Europe – such as the directives on information and consultation of workers as well as the health and safety framework directive – are in the front line of fire of this fitness check exercise.

The ETUC, with the support of the European trade unions, has started a special [#RethinkRefit campaign](#) to warn against the new Commission proposals which threaten the social acquis and the autonomy of the social partners.

The ETUI has made 'better regulation and REFIT' one of its main research priorities and over the last five years has published several studies analysing the history and developments of this political agenda. All these publications are available free of charge via the ETUI web site under the section '[Better Regulation and REFIT](#)'. A new in-depth working paper (to be published within the next week) will demonstrate how this agenda is no more and no less than an exercise in 'bureaucratic simplification with a hidden political agenda'.

Philippe Pochet, General Director ETUI

Publications

Job quality and women's labour market participation



This Policy Brief describes the historical and political background of the EU's 'Regulatory Fitness and Performance (REFIT)' programme, the mechanisms and instruments underpinning the programme, as well as the challenges to Social Europe raised by this exercise in 'better regulation'.

Authors: Agnieszka Piasna and Anke Plagnol

Focus

ETUI YouTube

If you are interested in our events but live too far from Brussels to attend, do not forget to pay regular visits to our [ETUI YouTube channel](#) where you will find the latest video clips and video interviews of speakers at our Monthly Forums or conferences.

The ETUI Youtube channel hosts 169 video clips with interviews of speakers from ETUI events, some of which have even been recorded in full for later viewing.

Events

[Save the dates](#)

[Read more](#)

EU REFIT machinery 'cutting red tape' at the cost of the *acquis communautaire*



This Policy Brief describes the historical and political background of the EU's 'Regulatory Fitness and Performance' (REFIT) programme, the mechanisms and instruments underpinning the programme, as well as the challenges to Social Europe raised by this exercise in 'better regulation'.

Author: Isabelle Schömann

[Read more](#)

Community organising and the implications for union revitalisation



Faced with changing labour markets, new employment patterns (e.g. temporary and precarious work) and declining trade union power and membership, unions need to (re)consider the ways in which they organise and mobilise workers.

Author: Jane Holgate

[Read more](#)

Transfer: European collective action in times of crisis, May 2015

The new issue of *Transfer: the European Review of Labour and Research*, published for the ETUI by Sage Publications is out. The coordinators of this May issue on European collective action in times of crisis are Roland Erne, Andreas Bieler, Darragh Golden, Idar Helle, Knut Kjeldstadli, Tiago Matos and Sabina Stan. [Read the free editorial](#) (also in [French](#) and [German](#)).

13 May: Monthly Forum - [Seven years on from the crisis: where is the EU with financial regulatory reform?](#), Brussels.

- 9 June: Lunchtime debate - ['Work-related risks. So as not to lose your life while earning your living'](#), Brussels. See also [the video teaser](#).
 - 23 June: Monthly Forum - [What social face of the new EU trade agreements?](#), a joint event with the Centre for EU Studies at Ghent University, Brussels.
-

Recent events

Former Commissioner Andor calls for European unemployment benefit

The introduction in the eurozone of an unemployment benefit system would strengthen social cohesion in Europe and rebuild citizens' trust in the integration project: such was the substance of an address delivered by former European Social Affairs Commissioner Laszlo Andor on 17 April during the closing session of a conference organised by the German Hans Böckler Foundation in partnership with the ETUI. The view expressed by Reiner Hoffmann, leader of the German trade unions, was that the goal of greater social justice in Europe required a broader array of measures.

[Read more](#)

- [Watch also the video](#) of the address by Maria Jepsen, Director of the ETUI Research department, at the *Europäisches Gespräch 2015*.
 - Read also the article ['Wohlstand in Europa'](#) (in German only) in the *Magazin Mitbestimmung*, issue 03/2015.
-

Pilot testing of capacity - building tools on nanomaterials

Nanomaterials are used in many EU workplaces despite our limited and even non-existent knowledge about the hazards they bring to human health or the environment, and about occupational exposure impacts. As use of nanomaterials increases, it is increasingly important to ensure that workers are aware of their existence and of the best ways to prevent worker exposure in the workplace.

[Read more](#)

Health and safety in the workplace in 2040

The second workshop of the ETUI scenario-building project

[Read more](#)

Training

Leadership and capacity-building for women in trade unions

ETUI Education has been asked to provide support and expertise by delivering the training course organised by ITUC/PERC on *Leadership and capacity-building for women in trade unions* in the Balkan region. This course, to be held on 19-21 May 2015 in Sarajevo, will enable participants – from countries including Serbia, Croatia, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and FYRO Macedonia – to identify how women can have a voice and learn to encourage leadership and equality in different environments.

In the media

- Philippe Pochet: [Les syndicats européens sont-ils vraiment en crise?](#) in AlterEcoPlus (9 April 2015). Also available in English on Social Europe: [Are Trade Unions In Crisis?](#) (5 May 2015).
- Interview with Kurt Vandaele for France Info (4 May 2015): [La France est-elle un pays de grévistes ?](#).
- 'Health and safety at work: unions angry', article in Europolitics (28 April 2015) quoting Tony Musu.
- 'Social dialogue or European social lobbying?' in *IR Notes* 30 about the recent [Working Paper](#) by Christophe Degryse
- Anact: ['Femmes, santé et travail'. Retour sur le colloque Etui de mars 2015](#) (23 April 2015).
- Philippe Pochet wrote an article for *El País*: [Pilares de una crisis](#) (4 May 2015).
- Philippe Pochet interviewed by *El País*: [Excluidos del nuevo mapa social](#) (3 May 2015).
- CRISP: [Grèves et conflictualité sociale en 2014](#), *Courrier hebdomadaire*, no 2246-2247, 2015.
- Interviews with Laurent Vogel: RTBF – VivaCité – Journal Parlé – Ed. nationale 8h00 – 28/04/2015 ([Séquence à 256 sec.](#)) and RTBF - La Première - Journal Parlé 8h00 - 28/04/2015 ([Séquence à 507 sec.](#)).
- Article by Laurent Vogel (in German): [Aufstieg und Niedergang eines sozialpolitischen Handlungsfeldes: der Arbeits- und Gesundheitsschutz der Europäischen Union](#)

Occupational Safety and Health 2040 (OSH 2040) was held in Asperen, the Netherlands, on 20-22 April 2015. A mixed group of trade unionists, researchers, employers' representatives and academics moved on to tackle the core issue after definition – by the first workshop held in January 2015 – of the socio-economic factors. The April workshop explored, among other things, the causes behind given scenarios, the impacts in terms of dilemmas, conflicts or opportunities entailed by scenarios for different stakeholders in OSH, and the critical borders for each scenario based on a horizon of 2040. The project will be continued by the work of drafting a publication on the process and findings and, in a later phase, dissemination of the output.

[Read more](#)

Other activities

- ETUI researcher Aline Conchon was invited to present and discuss the role of worker representation in corporate governance bodies at a hearing before the 'working group on transparency and corporate governance' of France Stratégie, the government think tank attached to the French Prime minister, on April 7 in Paris.
 - A book just published by Palgrave Macmillan entitled [Young workers and trade unions: a global view](#) with a contribution by ETUI researcher Kurt Vandaele.
 - A book shortly to be published by Palgrave Macmillan entitled [Minimum wages, collective bargaining and economic development in Asia and Europe: a labour perspective](#) with a contribution by ETUI researcher Bela Galgoczi.
 - On 28 April, ETUI researcher Fabienne Scandella took part in the annual EFFAT European Works Councils coordinators' conference in Zagreb where she delivered a presentation entitled 'Work-related stress: overview of the European autonomous framework agreement and landmarks for a trade-union approach'.
-

in *WSI Mitteilungen* 3/2015.

European Trade Union Institute
Bd. du Roi Albert II, 5 – 1210 Brussels
www.etui.org – etui@etui.org

The ETUI is financially supported by the European Union.

The European Union is not responsible for any use of the information contained in this publication.



Follow us on [twitter](#) and [youtube](#)