**Chronology 2007**

**Key events in European social policy**

**JANUARY**

**10 January: Trade union action**
The Court of Justice of the European Communities (ECJ) hears the explanations of the parties in the *Viking* case concerning the right to freedom of movement and the right to collective trade union action (see also 11 and 18 December) (ECJ, 23 November 2005, *ITF, Finnish Seamen's Union, Viking Line ABP, Viking Line Eesti, C-485/05, OJ C 060 of 11 March 2006, pp.16-18)*.

**15 January: European Parliament**
Announcement of the formation of the far-right political group ‘Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty’ (ITS) (see also 10 November 2007).

**18 January: Employment**
Meeting in Berlin of the European social partners, the ‘social troika’, the European Commission, the Social Platform and the European Parliament in order to feed into the informal meeting of the European Employment and Social Affairs Ministers on the topic of ‘quality jobs’ (*Bulletin of the European Union, No.9348 of 20 January 2007)*.

**18-20 January: Employment**
23 January: Social dialogue
UNICE, the European-level organisation representing private sector employers, renames itself ‘BusinessEurope’.

29 January: Social dialogue – discrimination

30 January: Equal opportunities
Launch of the European Year (2007) of Equal Opportunities for All, in Berlin, at the first Equality Summit bringing together ministers, social partner representatives, NGOs and public authorities.

30 January: Racism and xenophobia

31 January: Employment – unemployment
The unemployment statistics published by Eurostat confirm that the employment situation has improved throughout Europe (Bulletin of the European Union, No.9356 of 1 February 2007).

FEBRUARY

7 February: Social Europe
Nine EU Member States – Belgium, Luxembourg, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Spain, France, Greece, Hungary and Italy – sign in Paris a declaration entitled ‘Un nouvel élan pour l’Europe sociale’. These countries believe it ‘necessary to link the relaunch of Social Europe with the revival of the institutional dynamic’ (http://www.rpfrance.eu/spip.php?article665).
8 February: Economic immigration
The European Union prepares to open, on an experimental basis, the first ‘European employment agency’ in Mali, serving as a gateway for the recruitment of Malian workers wishing to move to the EU (IP/07/167).

19 February: Social protection

21 February: Health and safety

22 February: Employment

22 February: Elderly people
The Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council supports the establishment of a ‘European Alliance for Families’ proposed by the German presidency of the Council (6226/07-Presse 23).

26 February: Fundamental rights
26 February: ‘Social reality’


26 February: Wages and purchasing power

While the President of the Eurogroup, Mr Juncker, and the President of the ECB, Mr Trichet, oppose wage rises in Europe, the euro zone Finance Ministers launch a process of reflection on the redistribution of the fruits of growth (http://www.gouvernement.lu/salle_presse/communiques/2007/02/23ecofin/index.html).

MARCH

1 March: Fundamental rights


7 March: Discrimination


8 March: Employment

Tripartite Social Summit: Commission President, José Manuel Barroso, and Angela Merkel, German Chancellor, current President of the European Council, discuss with employers’ and workers’ representatives progress on the EU’s jobs and growth goals (IP/07/308).

8-9 March: Sustainable development

The European Council commits itself to binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (-20%) and to boost renewable energy use by 2020. Brussels European Council, Presidency Conclusions, 8-9 March 2007.
12 March: Sustainable development
The ETUC calls on the Commission to set up a European social partner platform to investigate ways of achieving the targets for the reduction of CO2 emissions by 2020 while strengthening employment and innovation in Europe (http://www.etuc.org/a/3439).

13 March: European social model
At the European welfare state congress held by the German trade union confederation DGB, the German Chancellor and President-in-Office of the European Council, Angela Merkel, calls on European countries to vigorously uphold the European social model vis-à-vis the rest of the world. (http://www.bundesregierung.de/Content/EN/Artikel/2007/03/2007-03-13-merkel-fuer-soziales-europa-kaempfen__en.html).

15 March: Social dialogue
The European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers’ Federation (EMCEF) and the European Union of the Natural Gas Industry (EUROGAS) launch the sectoral social dialogue committee for the natural gas industry.

15-16 March: Trade union action
European days of action held at Alcatel-Lucent and at Airbus.

19 March: European trade unionism
The Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) holds its Founding Assembly in Rome (Italy). Guy Ryder is elected President and John Monks, General Secretary.

21 March: Services of general interest
20-21 March: Labour law

24 March: Social Europe

APRIL

11 April: Working time

18 April: Social dialogue

19 April: Racism and xenophobia
The 27 Member States reach a compromise on the decision aimed at punishing racism and xenophobia (see 30 January 2007). 2794th Council meeting Justice and Home Affairs, Luxembourg, 19-20 April 2007 (8364/07-Presse 77).

19 April: Fundamental rights and citizenship
20 April: Flexicurity
European Commission conference on future proposals regarding ‘flexicurity’ in the European Union. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) calls for a socially acceptable balance between the needs of companies and the well-being of workers (http://www.etuc.org/a/4288).

20 April: Health services
At the Informal Health Council in Aachen (Germany), the European Commission presents the results of the public consultation concerning Community action in the field of health services. According to this consultation, a majority of respondents favour Community action in the field of health services, revolving around legislation and practical support for cooperation between European health systems (IP/07/524).

20 April: Information and consultation
At a meeting organised by the ETUC, some 200 European Works Council (EWC) members call for an urgent review of the EWC Directive (http://www.etuc.org/a/3586).

26 April: Social dialogue
The General Secretaries of the ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP officially sign a framework agreement on harassment and violence at work. Framework agreement on harassment and violence at work (http://www.etuc.org/a/3574).

28 April: Health and safety
An International Workers’ Memorial Day to commemorate the dead and injured is inaugurated at the initiative of trade unions all around the world.

May
1 May: Free movement
The Netherlands government officially opens its labour market to workers from the States having acceded to the European Union in 2004 (Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia and Slovakia).
6 May: Lifelong learning

16 May: Liberalisation
The postal workers’ trade unions demand the resignation of European Commissioner Charlie McCreevy, whom they accuse of being over-hasty in wishing to deregulate European postal services without ensuring the funding of a universal postal service for all citizens.

21-24 May: European trade unionism

23 May: Trade union action

29 May: Social Europe
First meeting of the Member States that signed the Paris Declaration on the relaunch of Social Europe (see 14 February).

30 May: Employment
30 May: Social dialogue

30 May: Economic and social cohesion

30 May: Pensions

JUNE

4 June: Health and safety
Launch by the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work of the European campaign ‘Lighten the load’ aiming to combat musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) at work. The Commission declares its readiness to legislate on the prevention of musculoskeletal disorders (http://ew2007.osha.europa.eu/about).

6 June: Asylum and immigration
The Commission announces a comprehensive package on asylum. This includes a Green Paper to launch a debate on the future of the Common European Asylum System, a proposal for a Directive which extends the possibility of granting long-term residence status to beneficiaries of international protection and an evaluation report on the Dublin system (IP/07/768).

6 June: Monetary policy
The European Central Bank raises its key interest rate to 4%.
13 June: Posting of workers
The Commission presents its assessment of national measures applied by Member States in the context of supervising the posting of workers, as well as the situation in terms of administrative cooperation (IP/07/817). According to the ETUC, the Commission is threatening the balance inherent in the final agreement reached on the Services Directive between the freedom to provide cross-border services and the need for effective mechanisms to oversee and enforce labour standards in the host country.

14 June: Health and safety
The European Court of Justice delivers its ruling in the case brought by the Commission against the United Kingdom for failing to transpose the 1989 framework directive on the health and safety of workers. In its ruling, the Court condones the use of the clause ‘reasonably practicable’ in UK health and safety legislation. It thus accepts that the employer’s safety obligations may be limited by economic considerations. The ETUC believes that this decision undermines the inalienable right of European workers to protection of their health and safety at work (Press Release No.41/07 of 14 June 2007 – Judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-127/05).

15 June: Social dialogue
Ernest Antoine Seillière of France is re-elected president of BusinessEurope with a two-year mandate (1 July 2007 – 30 June 2009).

20 June: Fundamental rights
3,000 trade unionists demonstrate in Brussels in favour of incorporating the Charter of Fundamental Rights into any new European constitutional treaty.

20 June: Social dialogue
The European Commission launches the ‘First phase consultation of social partners under Article 138(2) of the EC Treaty concerning cross-border transfers of undertakings, businesses or parts of undertakings or businesses’ (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/docs/cross_border_transfer_en.pdf).
20 June: Pensions
The European Parliament adopts the proposal for a directive on supplementary pensions by a large majority. COM (2005) 507 final of 20 October 2005. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) considers that this text is a step back from the Commission’s initial proposal (http://www.etuc.org/a/3748).

21-22 June: The euro
At the European Council, the Heads of State and Government give the go-ahead for the entry of Cyprus and Malta into the euro zone on 1 January 2008. Brussels European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Brussels, 21 and 22 June 2007 (D/07/2).

22 June: Reform treaty
The European Council reaches a political agreement on the content of the future European Reform Treaty. Brussels European Council, Presidency Conclusions, Brussels, 21 and 22 June 2007 (D/07/2).

25 June: Restructuring
The Commission approves the first two applications for European Globalisation Adjustment Fund (EGF) money concerning Peugeot (PSA) and Renault (IP/07/880).

27 June: Flexicurity

The ETUC regrets the bias in the Communication against the protection and stability of jobs, which is a key workers’ right as well as the basis for productive enterprises (http://www.etuc.org/a/3765).

28 June: Structural Funds
A high-level conference is held in Potsdam (Germany) to mark the 50th anniversary of the European Social Fund (ESF).
29 June: Sustainable development

July
4 July: Discrimination
The European Commission launches an online consultation on combating discrimination in the Member States and at European Union (EU) level, to help draw up new measures to fight against discrimination on grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability and sexual orientation (http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/aneval/green_en.htm).

6 July: Sustainable development
A study carried out for the European Commission by the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Social Development Agency (SDA), Syndex (France), Wuppertal Institute (Germany) and Istas (Spain) reveals that climate change and policies to attenuate climate change constitute a serious and unprecedented challenge for employment in Europe. ETUC, Syndex, ISTAS, SDA and Wuppertal Institute, ‘Climate Change and employment. Impact on employment in the European Union-25 of climate change and CO2 emission reduction measures by 2030’ (http://www.tradeunionpress.eu/Web/EN/Activities/Environment/Study climatechange/rapport.pdf).

6 July: Fight against terrorism

6 July: Flexicurity
An informal meeting of Employment and Social Affairs Ministers is held at Guimarães; some 7,000 Portuguese trade unionists demonstrate against the concept of flexicurity (MEMO/07/275).
11 July: Social dialogue

11 July: Liberalisation
The European Parliament votes by a huge majority (512 in favour, 155 against and 13 abstentions) to abolish the monopoly on the delivery of mail weighing less than 50 g on 1 January 2011.

18 July: Discrimination

23 July: Reform Treaty
Opening of the Intergovernmental Conference geared to drafting the new treaty.

AUGUST
10 August: Immigration

SEPTEMBER
12 September: Immigration
13 September: Flexicurity

John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), calls on the Council, the Commission and the European social partners to structure the flexibility debate around an agenda including in particular a directive on temporary agency work; establishment of the right to request a full-time job for the millions of involuntary part-time workers; and assurances that labour law covers and protects all workers who find themselves in a de facto relationship of subordination.

14 September: Better regulation
The President of the European Commission, Mr Barroso, appoints Edmund Stoiber to head a High Level Expert Group on the Reduction of Administrative Burdens.

17 September: Services of general interest
At a Forum organised in Lisbon by the Portuguese presidency of the Union, under the auspices of the European Parliament, Commissioner Vladimir Spidla announces the adoption ‘sooner or later’ of a legislative instrument for social services of general interest (Speech 07/536).

18 September: Asylum and immigration

19 September: Liberalisation
20 September: Flexicurity

OCTOBER
1 October: Liberalisation
The Telecommunications Council reaches a political agreement on full liberalisation of postal services by the end of 2010 at the latest. UNI-Europa Post denounces this agreement; to the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), this sectoral liberalisation demonstrates that the Commission has no overall vision of the need for universal services. 2821st Council meeting Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, Luxembourg, 1st and 2nd October 2007 (13066/07-Presse 203).

8 October: Employment
Celebrating ten years of the European Employment Strategy (EES) (IP/07/1455).

9 October: Flexicurity

17 October: Social exclusion
18 October: Social dialogue

22 October: Reform treaty
The Heads of State and Government reach agreement on the new European amending treaty.
For the ETUC, the social dimension of the European Union ‘is paying a price for the agreement’: the new treaty is notable for its lack of ambition and will not help advance social measures that will win back popular support for the European project (http://www.etuc.org/a/4139).

23 October: Immigration

24 October: Labour law
24 October: Taxation
Sahra Wagenknecht (GUE/NGL, Germany) withdraws her name from the ‘Report on the contribution of taxation and customs policies to the Lisbon Strategy’ adopted by MEPs in plenary session, in which the Parliament supports ‘reasonable’ fiscal competition in the EU (Report A6-0391/2007 of 10 October 2007).

NOVEMBER

1 November: Free movement
The Luxembourg government fully opens up its labour market to nationals of eight Member States which joined the EU in May 2004.

4 November: Flexicurity
‘Declaration of European lawyers. The European Commission’s Flexicurity Concept. For a labour law which really protects workers’. This is a joint Declaration of the European Association of Lawyers for Democracy and World Human Rights (ELDH), the Progress Lawyers Network (Belgium) and the European Democratic Lawyers (EDL) (http://www.ejdm.eu/Flexicurity-EN.htm).

5 November: Trade union action
Tens of thousands of journalists held a coordinated day of protest throughout Europe to draw attention to the crisis in the media caused by political pressure, as well as to the erosion of standards and poor working conditions which are destroying quality journalism. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) supports this day of action organised by journalists’ trade unions and associations.

5 November: Restructuring
The European Commission launches a new partnership with the main industry federations and employee organisations in the automobile industry in order to improve the anticipation and management of change in the sector (IP/07/1644).
5 November: Social dialogue

6 November: Services of general interest

8 November: Restructuring
Representatives of the associations of 16 industrial sectors in Europe (automobile, woodworking, paper, cotton, rayon and synthetic fibres, textiles, chemicals, fertilisers, ceramics, carbon and graphite, mines, metals, iron and steel, wire rope, steel tubes and ferro-alloys) and European and national trade union federations attend a seminar entitled ‘Competitiveness in a Global Economy – A Challenge to Trade Discipline?’ (IP/07/1644).

8 November: Liberalisation

8 November: Health and safety
10 November: European Parliament
Collapse of the ‘Identity, Tradition and Sovereignty’ (ITS) Group (see 15 January 2007) in the European Parliament following the withdrawal of five Romanian members of the Partidul România Mare.

13 November: Information and consultation
On 21 November, the Steering Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) welcomes this undertaking from the Commission (http://www.etuc.org/a/4304).

15 November: Information and consultation
The new European company BASF SE established in Ludwigshafen (Germany) concludes an agreement on employee participation. This agreement constitutes the biggest step ever taken towards mandatory broad-based employee participation within a European company. It operates through the BASF European Works Council and employee representation on the company’s supervisory board (http://www.etuc.org/a/4310).

15 November: Free movement
The European Parliament adopts the report by Carlos Coelho (EPP-ED, Portugal) assessing the application of the Schengen acquis in nine new Member States. The approval of this report makes it possible to eliminate checks at borders between the Schengen area and nine Member States (Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic). The effective removal of land and sea border checks takes place as from 21 December 2007 and, from 30 March 2008, those at international airports (Report A6-0441/2007 of 12 November 2007).
19 November: Services of general interest
John Monks, General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), and Carola Fischbach-Pyttel, General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), present a petition with more than half a million signatures to European Commission President José Manuel Barroso. The petition calls for an EU directive on public services (http://www.etuc.org/a/4277).

19 November: Social dialogue

19 November: Social exclusion
Danuta Hübner, Regional Policy Commissioner, puts forward an initiative seeking to improve access to finance for small businesses and for socially excluded people, also ethnic minorities, who want to become self-employed. This initiative aims to make small loans, or micro-credit, more widely available in Europe to satisfy unmet demand (IP/07/1713).

19-20 November: Indicators
A high-level conference entitled ‘Beyond GDP’ is organised on 19 and 20 November in partnership with the European Parliament, the OECD the Club of Rome and the WWF. The aim is to gain a better understanding of the notions of progress, wealth and well-being, to determine how best to measure these parameters and to integrate them into the decision-making process (http://www.beyond-gdp.eu).

20 November: Internal market
20 November: Services of general interest

26 November: Employment

26-27 November: Restructuring

29 November: Flexicurity
The European Parliament adopts by a large majority (496 votes in favour, 92 against) its report on Common Principles of Flexicurity, in which it argues for a 'balanced' set of flexicurity principles based on an improvement in the quality of work (promotion of stable working relations, action against abusive practices in non-standard contracts, action designed to improve job security for all workers whatever their occupational status, enhanced employability, etc.). Ole Christensen Report on Common Principles of Flexicurity (A6-0446/2007 of 15 November 2007).

29-30 November: Social dialogue
A major conference is organised in Lisbon by the European Commission together with the Portuguese EU Presidency on the concrete outcomes of European social dialogue and the benefits they have brought to European workers and companies (MEMO/07/528).
DECEMBER

5 December: Flexicurity
The Employment and Social Policy Council adopts the eight common principles underpinning flexicurity, as well as the joint opinion of the Employment Committee and the Social Protection Committee. These common principles are forwarded to the European Council of 13 and 14 December for approval. 2837th Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 5-6 December 2007 (16139/07-Presse 284).

5 December: Labour law
The Employment and Social Policy Council fails to agree on the draft working time directive or the draft directive on the rights of temporary workers. 2837th Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 5-6 December 2007 (16139/07-Presse 284).

The European Commission threatens to withdraw both draft directives. The ETUC regrets this double setback (http://www.etuc.org/a/4366).

5-6 December: Economic and social cohesion

6 December: Free movement
The EU Ministers of the Interior give the final green light for enlargement of the Schengen area as from 21 December. 2838th Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 6 and 7 December 2007 (15966/07-Presse 275).

11 December: Trade union action
In its judgment on the Viking case, the European Court of Justice (ECJ) confirms that the right to conduct collective action is a fundamental right, recognised by international and Community legislation. As such,
it may justify restrictions imposed on the fundamental freedom of establishment guaranteed under the EU Treaty, particularly in order to protect workers and their working conditions. However, the ECJ simultaneously narrows the scope of that justification in a way which could hamper the exercising of the right to collective action, especially in cross-border situations (Judgment of the Court of 11 December 2007 in Case C-438/05).

**12 December: Social exclusion**
The European Commission designates 2010 as the ‘European year for combating poverty and social exclusion’ to make ‘a decisive impact on the eradication of poverty by 2010’ (IP/07/1905).

**12 December: Fundamental rights**
The Parliament, the Commission and the Council sign and solemnly proclaim the Charter of Fundamental Rights (IP/07/1916).

**13 December: Treaty of Lisbon**

**18 December: Trade union action**
The European Court of Justice (ECJ) delivers its ruling concerning the Swedish trade union action against the Latvian shipbuilder Laval. This ruling contains a recognition, in Community law, of the right to strike as a fundamental rights and of the right of trade unions to take strike action against social dumping. Nevertheless, the ruling condemns the blockade mounted after the collapse of negotiations on the pay of the Latvian shipyard workers, since it is not a legitimate means of compelling the company to join a collective agreement. The Court deems such action excessive and unjustified (Judgment of the Court of 18 December 2007 in Case C-341/05).
The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) expressed its disappointment at this ‘unexpected decision’ by the ECJ and its concern at the implications of the case for Nordic countries’ systems of collective bargaining (http://www.etuc.org/a/4401).

18 December: Liberalisation
The MEPs belonging to the Committee on Transport and Tourism adopted without amendment at second reading the ‘common position of the Council on the adoption of a Directive (…) concerning the full accomplishment of the internal market of Community postal services’, COM (2007) 695 final of 9 November 2007.

19 December: Health services
The European Committee once again deferred the presentation of its proposal for a directive on cross-border healthcare services.

21 December: Free movement
Removal of land and sea border checks between the Schengen area and nine Member States: Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia and the Czech Republic.

Chronology drawn up by Christophe Degryse with the assistance of Dominique Jadot.