Chronology 2004

Key events in European social policy

JANUARY


27 January: Social dialogue: the Community of European Railways (CER) and the European Transport Workers’ Federation (ETF) sign two agreements negotiated as part of the European social dialogue on the European driving licence and the working conditions of railway workers assigned to cross-border services. “Agreement on the European licence for drivers carrying out a cross-border interoperability service” and “Agreement on certain aspects of the working conditions of mobile workers assigned to interoperable cross-border services”, Brussels, 27 January 2004.
FEBRUARY


18 February: Services of general interest: the Commission proposes new rules to increase legal certainty for services of general economic interest following the Altmark judgment of the Court of Justice, Press Release, IP/04/235, Brussels, 18 February 2004.


**MARCH**

1st March: **Social policy**: publication of the scoreboard on implementing the social policy agenda. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Scoreboard on implementing the social policy agenda”, COM (2004) 137 final of 1 March 2004.

3 March: **Employment/Social security**: the Commission publishes a communication on older workers and early retirement arrangements. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions “Increasing the employment of older workers and delaying the exit from the labour market”, COM (2004) 146 final of 3 March 2004.


4 March: **Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council**: the Employment and Social Affairs Ministers approve the key messages for the European Council at the end of March in the field of employment, social protection and social inclusion, and equality between women and men. 2567th Council meeting – Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 4 March 2004 (6436/04, presse 53).

5 March: **Employment**: 2004 report of the social partners on the implementation of the employment guidelines in the Member States. ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP, “2004 Report on social partner actions in Member States to implement employment guidelines”, 5 March 2004.

**Competencies and qualifications**: publication of the second follow-up report of the social partners on the framework of actions for the development of competencies and qualifications. ETUC, UNICE/UEAPME and CEEP, “Framework of actions for the lifelong...


30 March: **Working time:** the ETUC calls for the European Commission’s proposal for a directive on working time to put an end to long working hours in Europe. “The ETUC calls for a directive that will put an end to long working hours in Europe”, *ETUC Press Release*, Brussels, 30 March 2004.


**APRIL**

1st April: **Services of general interest:** Eurelectric sets out its position on public service obligations in the energy sector. “Regulatory Models in a Liberalised European Electricity Market” (www.eurelectric.org).

2 April: **Trade union action:** the ETUC organises a trade union demonstration in Brussels in favour of a more social Europe.


29 April: Asylum and immigration: after three and a half years of debates, the Home Affairs Ministers of the Fifteen agree on common minimum standards on procedures for considering asylum applications. 2579th Council meeting – Justice and Home Affairs, Luxembourg, 29 April 2004 (8694/04, presse 123).

Asylum and immigration: the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) severely criticises the agreement reached in the Council on the procedures for considering asylum applications.

Social dialogue: launch of the 30th sectoral social dialogue committee for the audiovisual industry.
MAY

1st May: **Enlargement**: the European Union is enlarged to include ten new Member States (Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Estonia, Lithuania, Latvia, Cyprus, Malta) and becomes the Europe of Twenty-Five.


**JUNE**

1st June: **Healthcare:** entry into force of the European Health Insurance Card.


3 June: **Non-discrimination:** the Commission launches consultation on the future orientation of the anti-discrimination policy.

8-10 June: **Services – Internal market:** the Congress of the European Mine, Chemical and Energy Workers’ Federation (EMCEF) adopts a motion to reject the Services Directive, Press Release, Brussels, 14 June 2004.

10 June: **Constitutional Treaty:** a few days before the European Council and the adoption of the draft Constitutional Treaty, “ETUC warns of rising anger among European workers at moves to weaken the EU Constitution’s social dimension”, ETUC Press Release, Brussels, 10 June 2004.

11 June: **Working time:** the Transport Council reaches a political agreement on a common position on the draft regulation concerning driving and resting times in road transport. 2589th Council meeting - Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, Luxembourg, 10 and 11 June 2004 (9865/04, presse 176).
11-12-13 June: European elections.


JULY


AUGUST


SEPTEMBER


10 September: Social dialogue: at the conference of the European social partners of the chemicals industry in Helsinki (ECEG and EMCEF), the European chemicals industry expresses its desire to see the establishment of a sectoral social dialogue committee for the chemicals industry, Bulletin of the European Union, No.8784 of 14 September 2004, page 20.


OCTOBER


November


Lisbon Strategy: the ETUC supports the Kok Report but regrets the fact that social cohesion and sustainable development have been neglected. “Social Europe as a driving force for economic growth: ETUC supports the Kok Report, but regrets that social cohesion and sustainable development are neglected”, ETUC Press Release, Brussels, 3 November 2004.

4 November: Tripartite summit: the Tripartite summit highlights the fact that the social Europe must be accompanied by a Europe that is economically strong and united.


26 November: Employee participation: the Competitiveness Council reaches a compromise on employee participation in companies resulting from cross-border mergers. 2624th Council meeting – Competitiveness (Internal Market, Industry and Research), Brussels, 25-26 November 2004 (14687/04, presse 323).

DECEMBER

7 December: Health and safety: the Employment Council reaches a political agreement on minimum health requirements for workers exposed to optical radiation.


14 December: Social dialogue: launch of the 31st sectoral social dialogue committee for the chemicals industry.

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