

## **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**

Informal meeting of the European Ministers of Employment and Social Affairs on the topic of 'quality jobs' (*Bulletin of the European Union*, No.9348 of 20 January 2007).

### **23 January: Social dialogue**

UNICE, the European-level organisation representing private sector employers, renames itself 'BusinessEurope'.

### **29 January: Social dialogue – discrimination**

The European social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP) publish their report on the progress made in implementing their joint strategy on gender equality. *Framework of Actions on Gender Equality* ([http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Fram\\_of\\_actions\\_gender\\_1st\\_report\\_fin al.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Fram_of_actions_gender_1st_report_final.pdf)).

### **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**

The German presidency signals its intention to resume negotiations on the 'Proposal for a Council Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia', COM (2001) 664 final of 28 November 2001 (see 19 April 2007).

### **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](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**

The Commission forwards its 'Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion' to the Employment Ministers. This report covers the fields of social inclusion, pensions, healthcare and long term care. *Joint Report on Social Protection and Social Inclusion 2007* (<http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/07/st06/st06694.en07.pdf>).

**21 February: Health and safety**

The Commission adopts its new five-year strategy on health and safety at work. Its goal is to reduce occupational diseases and industrial accidents by a quarter by 2012. 'Improving quality and productivity at work: Community strategy 2007-2012 on health and safety at work', COM (2007) 62 of 21 February 2007.

**22 February: Employment**

The Employment Council adopts its contribution to the Spring European Council concerning employment, social policy and gender equality. 2786<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 22 February 2007 (6226/07-Pressé 23).

**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-Pressé 23).

**26 February: Fundamental rights**

In a report published in Geneva, the International Trade Union Confederation notes irregularities in the implementation of fundamental workers' rights within the European Union. ITUC, 'Internationally-recognised core labour standards in the European Union. Report for the WTO General Council review of trade policies of the European Union', Geneva, 26 and 28 February 2007.

### **26 February: 'Social reality'**

The European Commission presents an interim report taking stock of social reality in Europe, to be approved by the Spring European Council of 8 and 9 March. 'Social Reality Stocktaking. Interim Report to the 2007 Spring European Council', COM (2007) 63 final of 26 February 2007.

### **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](http://www.gouvernement.lu/salle_presse/communiques/2007/02/23ecofin/index.html)).

## **MARCH**

### **1 March: Fundamental rights**

Following the Council's adoption of Regulation (EC) No.168/2007 establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (15 February 2007), the Agency began work on March 2007.

### **7 March: Discrimination**

The European Commission adopts its annual report on equality between women and men - 2007; this report is forwarded to the Spring European Council. COM (2007) 49 final of 7 February 2007.

### **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 CO<sub>2</sub> 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](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**

The European Commission defers adoption of its Communication, scheduled for 21 March, on follow-up to its White Paper of 2004 on services of general interest (see 20 November 2007). 'White Paper on services of general interest', COM (2004) 374 final of 12 May 2004.

### **20-21 March: Labour law**

The ETUC Executive Committee adopts its position on the European Commission's Green Paper 'Modernising and strengthening labour law to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century', COM (2006) 708 final of 22 November 2006 (<http://www.etuc.org/a/3557>).

### **24 March: Social Europe**

The Party of European Socialists (PES) adopts in Berlin a declaration to mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaties of Rome. This declaration calls for the creation of a 'New Social Europe'. Rasmussen, P. N. and Delors, J. (2007), *The New Social Europe*, PES, Brussels ([http://www.pes.org/downloads/New\\_Social\\_Europe\\_Web\\_EN.pdf](http://www.pes.org/downloads/New_Social_Europe_Web_EN.pdf)).

## **APRIL**

### **11 April: Working time**

The new regulation on driving time and rest periods for truck drivers, aimed at aligning the different Member States' practices, enters into force. Regulation (EC) No.561/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 March 2006 on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport (IP/07/2007).

### **18 April: Social dialogue**

The social partners issue their response to the Green Paper 'Modernising labour law to meet the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century' COM (2006) 708 final of 22 November 2006 (<http://www.etuc.org/a/3557>).

### **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). 2794<sup>th</sup> Council meeting Justice and Home Affairs, Luxembourg, 19-20 April 2007 (8364/07-Pressé 77).

### **19 April: Fundamental rights and citizenship**

The Council adopts the Decision 'establishing for the period 2007-2013 the specific programme "Fundamental rights and citizenship" as part of the general programme 'Fundamental Rights and Justice'" (OJ L 110 of 27 April 2007, pp.33-39).

### **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**

Launch of the lifelong learning programme for the period 2007/2013, at a conference in Berlin under the auspices of the German presidency of the European Union. Decision No.1720/2006/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 November 2006 establishing an action programme in the field of (OJ L 327 of 24 November 2006, pp.45-68).

### **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**

The ETUC Congress, held in Seville (Spain), adopts a Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2011 for European trade unionism. At the end of the Congress, Wanja Lundby-Wedin of Sweden becomes the first woman elected president of the ETUC ([http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf\\_Rapport\\_congress\\_EN.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_Rapport_congress_EN.pdf)).

### **23 May: Trade union action**

Two advocates general of the European Court of Justice conclude that collective trade union action hindering freedom of establishment can be tolerated (*Laval* and *Viking* cases) (see also 11 and 18 December 2007). Press Release No.36/07 of 23 May 2007 – Advocate General's Opinion in Case C-341/05 and Press Release No.37/07 of 23 May 2007 – Advocate General's Opinion in Case C-438/05).

### **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**

The Council adopts a resolution on the 'quality of work'. 2803<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 30 and 31 May 2007 (10026/07-Pressé 119).

### **30 May: Social dialogue**

The Commission adopts the 'second stage of consultation of European social partners on reconciliation of professional, private and family life' ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_dialogue/docs/reconciliation2\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/docs/reconciliation2_en.pdf)).

### **30 May: Economic and social cohesion**

The European Commission adopts the 'Fourth Report on economic and social cohesion in Europe. Growing Regions, growing Europe', Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2007.

### **30 May: Pensions**

The Council fails to agree on the draft directive on the portability of supplementary pension rights. 2803<sup>rd</sup> Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 30 and 31 May 2007 (10026/07-Pressé 119).

## **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](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 Commission publishes its 'Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions. Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security', COM (2007) 359 final of 27 June 2007.

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 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the European Social Fund (ESF).

## **29 June: Sustainable development**

The European Commission adopts a Green Paper on adapting to climate change, stressing in particular the social aspects of the adaptation. 'Adapting to climate change in Europe – options for EU action' COM (2007) 354 final of 29 June 2007.

## **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](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 CO<sub>2</sub> emission reduction measures by 2030' (<http://www.tradeunionpress.eu/Web/EN/Activities/Environment/Study/climatechange/rapport.pdf>).

### **6 July: Fight against terrorism**

A panel of jurists criticises the 'disproportionate impact' of the European fight against terrorism ([http://ejp.icj.org/hearing2.php3?id\\_article=136&lang=en](http://ejp.icj.org/hearing2.php3?id_article=136&lang=en)).

### **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**

The European social partners send the Commission their response to the 'Second Stage Consultation on the Reconciliation of Professional, Private and Family Life' (<http://www.etuc.org/a/3910>) ([http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf\\_ETUC\\_position\\_second\\_stage\\_-\\_reconc.\\_work\\_family\\_life-2.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_ETUC_position_second_stage_-_reconc._work_family_life-2.pdf)).

### **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**

The European Commission approves a Communication entitled 'Tackling the pay gap between women and men', which covers all direct and indirect discrimination as well as all inequalities affecting women on the labour market and their pay, COM (2007) 424 final of 18 July 2007.

### **23 July: Reform Treaty**

Opening of the Intergovernmental Conference geared to drafting the new treaty.

## **AUGUST**

### **10 August: Immigration**

The European Commission presents a 'proposal for a Council Decision establishing a European Migration Network' (EMN), COM (2007) 466 of 10 August 2007.

## **SEPTEMBER**

### **12 September: Immigration**

The Commission adopts its 'Third Annual Report on Migration and Integration', which analyses the measures taken at national and Community level concerning the admission and integration of third country nationals, gives an overview of policy trends, and contributes to assessing and strengthening integration measures, COM (2007) 512 final of 11 September 2007.

### **13 September: Flexicurity**

The European ministers discuss European Commission proposals on agreeing a common approach to flexicurity at a conference held in Lisbon by the Portuguese presidency of the European Union ('Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: More and better jobs through flexibility and security'), COM (2007) 359 final of 27 June 2007).

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**

The European Commission publishes its annual report on the activities of EURODAC, which reveals a drop in asylum applications but a sharp rise in illegals in 2006. *Annual report to the Council and the European Parliament on the activities of the EURODAC Central Unit in 2006*, SEC (2007) 1184 of 11 September 2007.

### **19 September: Liberalisation**

The Commission presents its proposal on European energy liberalisation, COM (2007) 528-529-530-531-532 of 19 September 2007 (IP/07/1361) ([http://ec.europa.eu/energy/electricity/package\\_2007/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/energy/electricity/package_2007/index_en.htm)).

### **20 September: Flexicurity**

The Socialist Group of the European Parliament, meeting in Brussels in the presence of Social Affairs Commissioner Vladimir Spidla and ETUC General Secretary, John Monks, identifies seven common principles to reconcile flexibility and security on the labour market. 'Towards Common Principles of Flexicurity: A PES Group reflection on the Commission's Communication' ([http://www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/media/documents/56921\\_56921\\_flexicurity\\_en\\_sept\\_07.pdf](http://www.socialistgroup.eu/gpes/media/documents/56921_56921_flexicurity_en_sept_07.pdf)).

## **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. 2821<sup>st</sup> Council meeting Transport, Telecommunications and Energy, Luxembourg, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2007 (13066/07-Pressé 203).

### **8 October: Employment**

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

### **9 October: Flexicurity**

The Ecofin Council adopts Conclusions on 'Flexicurity, economic aspects', 2822<sup>nd</sup> Council meeting Financial and Economic Affairs, Luxembourg, 9 October 2007 (13571/07-Pressé 217).

### **17 October: Social exclusion**

The European Commission launches an 'active inclusion' strategy to combat poverty in the Union. 'Modernising social protection for greater social justice and economic cohesion: taking forward the active inclusion of people furthest from the labour market', COM (2007) 620 final of 17 October 2007.

### **18 October: Social dialogue**

Agreement between the European social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, CEEP and UEAPME) on the challenges facing European labour markets. The Tripartite Social Summit in Lisbon examines this joint analysis. *Key challenges facing European labour markets: European social partners' joint analysis* ([http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf\\_Broch\\_key\\_challengeDEF-3.pdf](http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf_Broch_key_challengeDEF-3.pdf)).

### **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**

The European Commission launches the 'blue card' scheme to attract third country elites to Europe. 'Proposal for a Council Directive on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purposes of highly qualified employment', COM (2007) 637 final of 23 October 2007.

### **24 October: Labour law**

The European Commission presents the results of a public consultation launched on the adaptation of labour law to the current world of work; it publishes the Eurobarometer survey on undeclared work in Europe (IP/07/1584) ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/labour\\_law/green\\_paper\\_responses\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/labour_law/green_paper_responses_en.htm)). 'Undeclared Work in the European Union. Report. Fieldwork: May-June 2007', This survey was requested by Directorate General Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities and coordinated by Directorate General Communication ([http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_284\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_284_en.pdf)).

**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 (ELDHR), 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**

An agreement is signed in the maritime sector to transpose the 2006 ILO Convention into European legislation. *Agreement concluded by ECSC and ETF on the Maritime Labour Convention, 2006* ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/dsw/public/actRetrieveText.do?id=8546](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/dsw/public/actRetrieveText.do?id=8546)).

### **6 November: Services of general interest**

The European Commission adopts a Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions accompanying the Communication on 'A single market for 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe' – 'Services of general interest, including social services of general interest: a new European commitment', COM (2007) 724 final and COM (2007) 725 final of 20 November 2007.

### **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**

The Council adopts its common position concerning the full accomplishment of the internal market of Community postal services, COM (2007) 695 final of 9 November 2007.

### **8 November: Health and safety**

The European Commission adopts its 'Communication to the Council and the European Parliament transmitting the European framework agreement on harassment and violence at work' adopted on 26 April 2007 by the European social partners, COM (2007) 686 final of 8 November 2007.

### **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**

During the European Parliament debate on the 2008 legislative work programme, the President of the Commission, José Manuel Barroso, confirms his intention to submit a proposal aimed at amending the European Works Council (EWC) Directive, so as to enable EWCs to anticipate and monitor restructuring. Commission Legislative and Work Programme 2008, COM (2007) 640 final of 23 October 2007.

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**

For the second time, the European social partners (ETUC, BusinessEurope, UEAPME and CEEP) adopt an activity report setting out the initiatives taken to implement their joint strategy in the field of gender equality (Framework of Actions on Gender Equality, adopted in March 2005). *Framework of Actions on Gender Equality, Second Follow-up Report 2007* ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/social\\_dialogue/docs/fram\\_actions\\_gender\\_2ndreport07\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/social_dialogue/docs/fram_actions_gender_2ndreport07_en.pdf)).

### **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**

The Commission presents its vision of the internal market in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. 'A single market for 21<sup>st</sup> century Europe', COM (2007) 724 final of 20 November 2007.

### **20 November: Services of general interest**

The European Commission adopts its Communication, initially scheduled for 21 March 2007, on how to follow up its 2004 White Paper on services of general interest. *Progress since the 2004 White Paper on services of general interest*, SEC (2007) 1515 of 20 November 2007.

### **26 November: Employment**

The 'Employment in Europe' (2007) Report highlights a significant recovery of Europe's labour markets in 2006, which has resulted in 4 million extra jobs (the sharpest increase since 2000). *Employment in Europe 2007*, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, Luxembourg, 2007.

### **26-27 November: Restructuring**

The European Commission holds a further session of the 'Restructuring' Forum, on the subject of the adaptation of SMEs to change. *Restructuring Forum 'Adaptation of SMEs to Change' General Forum Report* ([http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/restructuring/docs/general\\_report\\_final\\_version\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/restructuring/docs/general_report_final_version_en.pdf)).

### **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. 2837<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 5-6 December 2007 (16139/07-Pressé 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. 2837<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs, Brussels, 5-6 December 2007 (16139/07-Pressé 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**

The ETUC Executive Committee delivers its contribution to the European Commission's consultation concerning the fourth report on economic and social cohesion. 'Growing Regions, Growing Europe', ETUC Contribution to the Commission consultation, ETUC's Resolution adopted by the ETUC Executive Committee, Brussels, 5 and 6 December 2007 (<http://www.etuc.org/a/4386>).

### **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. 2838<sup>th</sup> Justice and Home Affairs Council meeting, Brussels, 6 and 7 December 2007 (15966/07-Pressé 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**

The 27 EU Heads of State and Government solemnly sign the new 'Treaty of Lisbon'. Conference of the Representatives of the Governments of the Member States, Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, Brussels, 3 December 2007 (CIG 14/07) (<http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/cg00014.en07.pdf>).

### **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.**