

## **Timeline 2001: The main high points in the social domain**

### **January**

**19 January:** The Council adopts decision on **employment guidelines** 2001. Decision 2001/63/EC.

**31 January:** The Commission adopts its second report on **economic and social cohesion** in the European Union. This document opens the debate on the future of cohesion policy in the run up to enlarging the EU to Central and East European countries. COM (2001) 24 final of 31 January 2001.

### **February**

**7 February:** An agreement is reached at the Social Dialogue Committee with a view to setting **guidelines for teleworking** in Europe. Guiding principles are set out to enable teleworking to be developed in European telecommunications industry.

**15 February:** Adopting a resolution on the social impact of industrial restructuring, the European Parliament calls for a review of the guidelines for **works councils** and **mass redundancies**. Resolution B5-0089/2001.

**22 February:** The European Commission adopts its first **Scoreboard on implementing the Social Policy Agenda**. COM (2001) 104 final of 22 February 2001.

**26 February:** Signature of the Nice Treaty.

**28 February:** Creating **new European labour markets** by 2005: the aim of a strategy published by the European Commission. Concretely, its approach aims to eliminate obstacles to mobility and raise the skill levels of European workers. COM (2001) 116 final of 28 February 2002 (New European labour markets open to all with access for all)

## **March**

**6 March:** The Employment and Social Affairs Council opens the debate on **the social sustainability of pensions schemes** in Europe.

**19 March:** The second annual report on the **social situation in the European Union** is published. It contains statistics and analyses covering four sectors – population, living conditions, income and social involvement. European Commission, Eurostat (2001) *The Social Situation in the European Union, Panorama of the European Union series*.

**21 March:** Trade union/employer negotiations on **temporary work** started in summer 2000 between the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), the Union of Industrial and Employers Confederations of Europe (UNICE) and the European Centre of Enterprises with public participation and of enterprises of general economic interest (CEEP) in order to regulate temporary work. On 15 March 2001, the ETUC negotiating team decides it is no longer possible to continue with the negotiations and on 21 and 22 March, the ETUC Executive Committee decides to sever the negotiations.

**23 March:** The Council reaches political agreement on the draft amendment to the 1989 directive on minimum health and safety requirements for work at a height (**work at a height** directive).

**23-24 March:** The first annual **European Spring Council** is held in Stockholm, focussing on economic and social issues. Among other things, employment rate targets are set.

## **April**

**4 April:** The European Parliament adopts a resolution on **integrating disabled people**. Members of the European Parliament call on the Commission to present a draft action programme to tackle disability starting in 2004, and to propose a directive covering all areas of the EU's competence with a view to equal treatment of the disabled. Resolution A5-0084/2001 on the Commission Communication "Towards a barrier free Europe for people with disabilities" (COM (2000) 284).

**26 April:** European social partners in the trade sector, represented by Eurocommerce (employers) and Uni-Europa (workers), sign a sectoral agreement on **teleworking** guidelines. The agreement regulates teleworking through collective agreements and conventions at national and company level.

## **May**

**10 May:** Following numerous announcements of company closures and restructuring in Europe, the Commission publishes a series of initiatives aiming to "help companies and workers successfully **adapt to industrial changes**". The measures involve Community legislation and also call for social dialogue between European social partners and the promotion of best practices implemented by companies (IP/01/674).

**17 May:** Trade union organisations from the United Kingdom, France, Belgium, Germany, Spain and Portugal, and the European Trade Union Confederation, organise a **Euro-demo** in London to protest at the restructuring plan unveiled in March by the company Marks & Spencer without prior consultation or information for worker representatives.

**21 May:** The social partners fail to agree on a framework agreement on regulating **temporary work** in Europe (cf. 21 March). Following the breakdown, Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou pledges to propose a directive on temporary work.

**30 May:** The European Commission proposes that 2003 be proclaimed **European Disability Year**.

## June

**June:** The Member States submit their “**national plans to combat poverty and social exclusion**” where they put forward their political priorities for the next two years (July 2001-June 2003).

**6 June:** The European Commission and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) exchange letters about “**mastering globalisation**” being the focus of closer EU-ILO cooperation.

**11 June:** The Employment and Social Affairs Council adopts amendments to the 1976 **equal opportunities** directive, updating it by defining “sexual harassment” and drawing a parallel between harassment and sexual discrimination. The Council also reaches political agreement on the draft directive on **worker information and consultation** (see below) and on minimum health and safety requirements for workers exposed to **noise**.

**15-16 June:** The European Council meets in Gothenburg (Sweden). It adopts a **sustainable development** strategy and broad Principles for securing the long-term sustainability pension systems

**20 June:** The Commission adopts a Communication aiming to improve the **quality of employment** and standards of living in the EU. The plan should make it possible to set benchmarks for governments, social partners and NGOs based on “quality indicators” for the various jobs, labour markets and social policies. COM (2001) 313 final of 20 June 2001. Commission Communication “Employment and social policies: a framework for investing in quality”.

**26 June:** Seven general principles and ten guidelines are the central points of a **code of conduct** adopted on 26 June 2001 for hairdressers, signed by the social partners in the personal services sector (CIC-Europe for the employers and UNI-Europa Hair and Beauty for the trade unions).

## July

**11 July:** The Commission publishes a Communication on the open method of co-ordination in terms of **immigration**. COM (2001) 387 of 11 July 2001. an open method of co-ordination for the community immigration policy.

**18 July:** The Commission publishes a Communication aiming to implement a European strategy to promote **basic employment standards** and social governance at global level. The document suggests a number of measures to be taken at European and international level to encourage the effective application of basic employment standards in the world. COM (2001) 416 of 18 July 2001.

At the same time, the Commission adopts a Green Paper on “Promoting a European framework for **corporate social responsibility** in Europe”. COM (2001) 366 final of 18 July 2001 “Green Paper: Promoting a European framework for corporate social responsibility”.

## September

**12 September:** The Commission adopts the annual **employment package** with three main strands – a report on Member States’ performance in employment, a series of recommendations to the Member States and Guidelines for 2002.

Agreed Report: COM (2001) 438.

Recommendation: COM (2001) 512.

Guidelines: COM (2001) 511.

**19 September:** The European Council and European Parliament reach agreement in conciliation on the **EU Action Programme for combatting social exclusion 2002-2006**.

**21 September:** A **Euro-demo** is organised in Liège by the European Trade Union Confederation during the meeting of the EU’s fifteen Economics and Finance Ministers. The demands call for better co-ordination of economic policies in order to achieve full employment in the Union.

**21 September:** An extraordinary meeting of the European Council is held in Brussels in order to assess the international situation following the 11 September 2001 **terrorist attacks**.

## **October**

**8 October:** After 31 years of negotiations, deadlock and breakthrough at last, the Employment and Social Affairs Council of Minister adopts the regulation concerning the **European company** statute and the directive on **worker involvement**. Council Regulation (EC) 2157/2001 on the European company statute, and Council Directive 2001/86/EC supplementing the statute for a European company with regard to the involvement of employees.

**8 October:** The social partners for temporary work, Euro-CIETT (European Committee of the International Confederation of Temporary Work Organisations) and Uni-Europa (the European wing of Union Network International), negotiating in the Sectoral Social Dialogue Committee on **Temporary Work**, reach agreement on a joint contribution to the European Commission's work on temporary work.

**10 October:** The Commission adopts its first draft joint **report on the social inclusion policies** of Member States' governments. The report focusses on four main objectives – promoting involvement in the labour market and access for all to resources, rights, goods and services; preventing the risk of exclusion; action for the most vulnerable; and mobilising all stakeholders. Following protests by several Member States, the final report is quite different. COM (2001) 565 final of 10 October 2001. Commission Communication "Draft joint report on social inclusion".

**12 October:** Negotiations are launched between European social partners on **teleworking**.

**12 October:** To strengthen current social and safety legislation for road transport, the European Commission proposes a clearer definition of **driver working and rest time** throughout the European Union, and to set up an effective penalty system. COM (2001) 573 final of 12 October 2001 regulation on the harmonisation of certain social legislation relating to road transport.

**15 October:** Integrating social concerns into the procedures for allocating contracts in **public tendering**: the European Commission attempts to respond to this issue through a Communication that explains to national authorities the degree of latitude they have with regard to EU competition rules in terms of taking social policy into account even at the stage of drawing up calls for tender. COM (2001) 566 final of 15 October 2001. Interpretative communication on the community law application to public procurement and the possibilities for integrating social considerations into public procurement.

**19 October:** The European Council meets in Ghent. The EU reaffirms its solidarity with the United States and expresses support for action against **terrorism**.

**19 October:** A **Euro-demo** is organised in Ghent by the main Belgian trade unions and the European Trade Union Confederation, where the “Ghent Social Declaration” on “Building a Europe of Solidarity” is published, outlining fifteen trade union demands.

**23 October:** A **European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC)** is set up that will come onstream in 2002. The new body will have the task of keeping political and social stakeholders informed about the economic and social impact of industrial change and the management of the repercussions.

**30 October:** The European Commission publishes a Communication on **structural indicators** to measure progress with regard to the targets set in the Lisbon strategy. COM (2001) 619.

## November

**9 November:** The European Commission publishes a Communication on strengthening the **local dimension of the European employment strategy**. COM (2001) 629 final of 6 November 2001.

**15 November:** The Commission adopts a Communication on a common policy on **illegal immigration**. COM (2001) 672.

**21 November:** The Commission unveils a Communication on making a European area of life-long **learning a reality**. COM (2001) 678.

**28 November:** The European Commission proposes that the EU implements a common **asylum** policy introducing an open co-ordination method. COM (2001) 710.

## December

**3 December:** The Employment and Social Affairs Council reaches political agreement on revising the directive aiming to provide workers in Europe with protection in the event of **their employer going bankrupt**. The fifteen ministers launch the process of updating the regulation on **coordinating social security systems**. They adopt a series of indicators of **poverty and social exclusion**, and decide to begin European consultation on the Belgian Presidency's proposal to set up a **social mediation** process in the EU.

**5 December:** To open the debate on the future of **health care** in the European Union, the Commission adopts a Communication on "The future of healthcare and care for the elderly: guaranteeing accessibility, quality and financial viability". COM (2001) 723 final of 5 December 2001.

**13 December:** A **Euro-demo** is organised in Brussels by the European Trade Union Confederation and the main Belgian trade unions of nearly 100,000 people.

**13 December:** A **Social Summit** is held at Château de Laeken (the day before the Laeken European Summit) chaired by President Prodi and the Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt. The meeting aims to



produce a balance sheet of social dialogue since 1985 and debate the role of the social partners in the future against the backdrop of institutional reform. The social partners send the European Council a **joint contribution** to this end for the Laeken Declaration.

**14-15 December:** The European Council meets in Laeken. It adopts the Declaration on the future of the European Union and convenes a Convention to prepare for the next Intergovernmental Conference, thereby launching the process of the widescale **reform of the EU**.

**17 December:** An agreement is signed in conciliation between the Council and the European Parliament on the directive setting a general framework for **worker information and consultation** in companies.

**17 December:** Following a Council-European Parliament conciliation procedure, an agreement is reached on the draft directive on **lorry drivers' working time**.