



Editorial

On 13 February the three Belgian trade union confederations conducted a general strike in protest at ongoing wage negotiations which had been blocked by employers, who refused to raise wages by more than 0,8% - despite the favorable economic climate. The ETUI supported the strike and rescheduled planned activities for that day. One of those was the annual European Workers' Participation Competence Centre (EWPCC) Conference which, rescheduled over the course of 14 and 15 February, brought together about 150 employee representatives and other practitioners, academic experts, trade unions and policy-makers to critically assess how European Works Council (EWC) rights could be better enforced. The EWCs are bodies representing the interests of employees of multinational companies (MNC) to central management. They are made up of national representatives elected by workers from countries where an MNC has operations. At the moment, there are 1112 MNCs with an EWC or a European Company (SE) works council.

Although the European Commission's recent evaluation of the Recast EWC Directive rightly identified a wide range of existing and pressing problems, in practice it stopped well short of proposing any robust policy instruments capable of properly addressing these problems. These lukewarm proposals were a great disappointment to those who have, for decades, watched EWCs' and SE works councils' rights to appropriate information and consultation be ignored or flouted. Therefore, the 2019 EWPCC Conference focused on the ways in which EWCs and SE works councils' rights can be enforced using legal means. Lawyers, EWC members and trade union officials and experts with experience representing EWCs and SE works councils in the courts of law of different countries shared their experience and advice. ETUI researchers also presented their findings on EWC and SE works councils jurisprudence and received valuable comments and advice. We always greatly appreciate these opportunities for an exchange of views with our stakeholders from all over Europe, and we are already looking forward to next year's edition which will focus on the results of the large-scale survey of EWCs conducted by the ETUI in 2018.

On a different note, it is also important to mention that we showed our support for the initiative "Workers for Climate", which joined together with the ongoing protests of school children who pass every Thursday in front of the ETUI building demanding urgent action to prevent climate change. Consistent with the many publications that the Institute has published over the last decade, as well as the numerous conferences we have organized on the topic, we cannot remain on the sidelines when the youth of Europe is showing such determination in marching in the streets in great numbers calling for decisive action. Our role is to inform the debate, in particular by making sure that the social dimension of the necessary transition is taken into account.

Philippe Pochet, General director ETUI



Publications

European integration challenges in south-east Europe

The latest issue of the SEER Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe for 2018 addresses European integration challenges in south-east Europe. In this issue we focus on the challenges of this integration process from different angles. First a theoretical essay by Christophe Solioz sets the tone, followed by an article covering wage developments and the lack of wage convergence in the region and another one addressing the challenge of migration for Western Balkans countries. Two more articles on relevant social issues and two book reviews make the issue complete.

[Read more](#)

Croatian translation of manuals for workers' representatives

The three booklets developed by the European Workers' Participation Competence Centre (EWPCC) containing practical and helpfully illustrated information for workers' representatives in transnational information and consultation bodies were translated into Croatian. They already exist in DE, EL, EN, ES, FR, NL, PL, SW and IT.

[Read more](#)

ETUI researcher Sara Lafuente Hernández has published her article "**Negotiated board-level employee representation in European companies: Leverage for the institutional power of labour?**" in the European Journal of Industrial Relations. In the article she shows that negotiated rules on board-level representation provide limited institutional leverage for European workers. [Read more here](#)

Recent events

Just transition – not just another transition

Almost 10 years ago, the successor to the

No poverty eradication without environmental action

A public debate organized by the Club of

international Commission on the Measurement of Economic Performance and Social Progress, known for its report, *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up*, published a follow-up, *Beyond GDP: Measuring What Counts for Economic and Social Performance*, in which the authors put more emphasis on inequality and sustainability. For more than twenty years this has also been at the core of trade unions' demands for the transition to an environmentally sustainable economy.

[Read more](#)

Rome EU-Charter together with the EP Intergroup on "Climate Change, Biodiversity and Sustainable Development" on 19 February looked into the interface of environmental and social issues. ETUI General Director Philippe Pochet participated in the panel discussing concrete examples from the field, as well as good and bad practices with regard to achieving SDGs within Europe. P. Pochet and D. Bouget are convening the stream *Reconciling ecological and social citizenship* during the 17th ESPAnet Conference 2019. For more information please click on the button below.

[Read more](#)

Save the date

19/03: [Monthly Forum - EU social protection reform: reducing the vulnerability of workers?](#)

26/03: [What does it take to have a European union working for workers? Launch of the ETUI/ETUC Benchmarking Working Europe 2019 report](#)

[If you wish to receive invitations for ETUI events, please register here.](#)

Training



Young trade union leaders: second week

The second week of the ETUI training course for young European trade union leaders took place in Brussels from 18th to 22nd February.

The 22 participants from across Europe had the opportunity to learn more about the coming ETUC Congress from Liina Carr, one of the ETUC Confederal Secretaries, but also about the internal ETUC decision making process and how this is reflected in its external relations.

[Read more](#)

New in Reforms Watch

[Italy: government resets pension age and launches new benefit scheme for low income](#)

[earners](#), 14/02

[Portugal: updated data show increase of the strike number in the last three years](#), 14/02

[Luxembourg: the year 2019 brings several legislative changes](#), 20/02

[Greece: a first policy effort to re-reinstate the minimum wage process after the end of the bailout](#), 20/02

In the media

1/02: [L'outil du droit communautaire dans les luttes pour la santé au travail en Europe](#),
Entre les lignes entre les mots

5/02: [Minder werken voor allen, niet voor enkelen](#), MO

6/02: [Een kortere werkweek: minder werken voor allen, niet voor enkelen](#), VRTnws

12/02: [Belgen staken graag en dat loont nog ook](#), De Standaard

13/02: [België behoort tot Europese stakingskampioenen](#), De Tijd

17/02: [Retribuzioni, calo del 4.3% in 7 anni. Perché il problema dell'Italia sono gli stipendi](#),
24 ore

27/02: [Will workers' rights lose out to 'freedom of establishment'?](#), Social Europe

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