



ETUC

EUROPEAN TRADE UNION
CONFEDERATION

NEWSLETTER

N° 3
November-December
2005



Dear readers,

The UK Presidency finished on a more positive note, thanks to agreement by the European Council on 15-16 December of the Financial Perspectives 2007-2013. One could have feared a worse outcome, given that this Presidency was not particularly positive in its commitment to social Europe and that its achievements generally were rather meagre. The financial agreement enables Europe to escape from the state of deadlock it has been in since the 'no' results in the French and Dutch referendums. Obviously, the ETUC would have wished for a more ambitious budget, and it expressed this view on a number of occasions. We believe, indeed, that commitment to a political project can be measured partly by the resources made available to it. However, the effort that each participant made to reach an agreement must be welcomed. It has staved off a financial crisis, which is important in these difficult times for the construction of Europe.

We will soon have the opportunity to make our opinions heard. Indeed, a crucial appointment awaits the European trade union movement at the beginning of 2006, because the European Parliament plenary session on 15 February will vote on the draft Services Directive. The ETUC is therefore calling for a general mobilisation in Strasbourg on 14 February. I am hoping for the biggest demonstration possible, to demand a Services Directive designed in the interests of citizens and workers.

In anticipation of this rendezvous, I wish you all a very happy New Year 2006.

John Monks
General Secretary

SUMMARY

● Editorial	p.1	
● EU news	p.2	
● ETUC news	p.5	
● EU Agenda	p.8	
● ETUC Agenda	p.9	
● Communications	p.10	
● Interview with Joel Decaillon	p.11	

ETUC
(European Trade Union Confederation)

Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5
B-1210 Brussels (Belgium)
Telephone: +32 (0)2 224 04 11 Fax: +32 (0)2 224 04 54
E-mail: media@etuc.org

[Back <<<](#)

EU news

'Services' Directive: the ETUC condemns the outcome of the vote by the European Parliament's IMCO committee – 22/11/2005

The ETUC condemned the outcome of the vote of 22 November in the European Parliament's [Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee \(IMCO\)](#) on the draft 'Services' Directive. It was a step backwards from the line adopted by the [EP Committee on Employment and Social Affairs \(EMPL\)](#). The ETUC considers the outcome of this vote totally unacceptable, and is prepared to take a tougher stance if there is no sign of achieving a compromise on the issues of most concern, namely: **excluding services of general interest**, particularly social services and water; **excluding certain sensitive sectors** such as private security and temporary work agencies; **withdrawal or fundamental modification of the country-of-origin principle**. Even if labour law is to be excluded from the directive, [the recent declarations by Commissioner McCreevy](#) on the Swedish collective bargaining system have put the European trade union movement on the alert. The ETUC calls on Members of the European Parliament to find the best wording possible, in preparation for the vote in plenary (February 2006) to **reaffirm the exclusion of labour law, including collective bargaining and industrial relations**. The ETUC will maintain its [mobilisation](#) aimed at obtaining drastic changes on behalf of all European workers. The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is calling for a demonstration on 14 February 2006 in Strasbourg.

[ETUC press release](#)

ECB decision to raise interest rates: ETUC reaction –01/12/2005

The European Trade Union Confederation has branded the decision taken by the [European Central Bank](#) (ECB) on 1 December to raise interest rates as unnecessary and a potential risk to recovery. The ECB justified its decision on the grounds of warding off a – possible – danger of inflation in the European economy. *'If the ECB wanted to give a warning signal to trade unions on upcoming wage negotiations by increasing its interest rate, this was totally unnecessary. Trade unions in Europe already understand the need to have wage increases compatible with the objective of price stability'*, says John Monks. The European trade union movement insists that it is a mistake to think that inflation is just around the corner, for wages are basically sitting tight and the projected recovery is too modest to present any risk whatsoever to price stability. The recovery, on the other hand, is weak and fragile because it is facing several problems, such as falling real wages and the risk of a restrictive budgetary policy. The ETUC therefore warns the ECB not to undermine the recovery by engaging in a series of further interest rate hikes.

[ETUC press release](#)[ECB press release](#)

ECOFIN Council: the ETUC warns against placing the entire burden of globalisation on workers' shoulders – 06/12/2005

At the ECOFIN Council on 6 December, the finance ministers of the European Union examined the impact of globalisation on the European economy.

The ETUC called upon the members of the ECOFIN Council not to place the entire burden of adjustment to globalisation on workers' shoulders, particularly in the case of relocations and restructuring operations. The European trade union movement recognises that globalisation does offer opportunities for improving living standards, but it also has the potential of deeply dividing society by creating few winners and many losers. *'Globalisation should be about moving the European economy higher up*

the value added chain. Allowing firms to fire workers overnight and pushing unemployed people to accept poverty jobs acts in conflict with workers upgrading themselves into better jobs. It only serves to make big business profits even bigger while spreading massive insecurity within the workforce', says John Monks, General Secretary of the ETUC.



[ETUC press release](#)

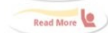
[ECOFIN press release](#)

Climate change negotiations in Montreal: European trade unions urge European governments to add a missing ingredient – a labour and social dimension – to the climate change negotiations - 07/12/2005

European trade unions met with leaders of EU Governments in Montreal, Canada, [for the 11th UN Climate Change Conference](#). They called on them to add a 'missing ingredient – the labour and social dimension' to the Kyoto Protocol. '*Climate change is about people, their wellbeing and their jobs*', said Sophie Dupressoir of the ETUC, a member of the 14-member union delegation. The ETUC announced the launch of an innovative, 11-nation European study on the implications for employment and training of the EU commitments to cut greenhouse gas emissions in 2012 and 2030. By doing so, the European trade unions demonstrated that they can make positive inputs into policies needed to face that challenge.



[ETUC press release](#)



[Union resolution for COP 11](#)

Extraordinary Competitiveness Council. REACH: Member States conclude agreement on a text that lacks ambition – 13/12/2005

The ETUC welcomes the agreement reached at the extraordinary meeting of the Competitiveness Council because it sets Europe firmly on the road to an economy that takes greater account of the health and environmental impacts of the chemicals industry.

"This text confirms the principle of reversing the burden of proof and placing it on the producers of the 30,000 substances covered by the measure. For workers, this means a decisive step forward, because from now on companies will have to demonstrate that these substances can be manufactured and used safely before they put them on the market," said Joël Decaillon, ETUC Confederal Secretary responsible for the REACH dossier.

The ETUC, however, regrets the new concessions granted to the chemicals industry. In the agreement adopted by the Competitiveness Council, the principle of obligatory substitution - [which had survived the 1st reading in the European Parliament](#) - is lost. For the ETUC, this represents a significant retreat compared to REACH's initial ambitions in terms of workers' health protection. Without a strong element of compulsion, the number of companies undertaking to abandon the production of dangerous substances in favour of safer alternatives runs the risk of being very limited.



[ETUC press release](#)

[Competitiveness council conclusions](#)

[Back <<](#)

Financial perspectives 2007-2013: the ETUC welcomes the deal agreed at the European Council – 17/12/2005

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is pleased that the European Council on 15-16 December reached a crucial agreement on the 2007-2013 budget, enabling the European Union to get out of the deadlock it has been in since June. *"This deal is a strong political signal enabling Europe to move forward. Everyone has made progress in this context"*, declared General Secretary John Monks.

The ETUC had, however, called for a larger budget that would be capable of meeting strong European ambitions and, in particular, of making real progress on the Lisbon Agenda and forward-looking projects on research and development, innovation, and so on. And while it welcomes the budgetary agreement, the ETUC regrets a reduction in the allocation for Structural Funds to promote solidarity between populations and territories. The ETUC also stresses that social policy is a pillar of the construction of Europe that must be guaranteed adequate financial resources in order to maintain and strengthen the European Social Model, as well as meeting the challenges arising from enlargement and globalisation.



[ETUC press release](#)



[ETUC resolution on the financial perspectives](#)



[Financial perspectives 2007-2013 \(European Council document\)](#)

WTO Conference in Hong Kong: the ETUC believes the WTO agreement to be an illusory victory - 19/12/2005

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) finds that the ministerial agreement reached in Hong Kong on the continuation of the Doha Round of trade talks misses its fundamental objective of promoting development and decent employment.

The political weakness of the EU is more and more evident. Its isolation throughout the week, and its difficulty in activating new alliances with the developing countries represented by the G-90 group, is worrying. Employment is largely absent in this deal. No instruments have been put forward for measuring the impact on jobs of the agreements in the three pillars: agriculture, non-agricultural market access, and services. Furthermore, once again governments have refused to include a reference to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and to social rights and employment standards.

The Doha Round was supposed to focus on development. The European trade union movement believes that this is far from the case.



[ETUC press release](#)



[Hong Kong Conference web site](#)

[Back <<<](#)

ETUC news

Third Conference of the Euromed Trade Union Forum 'Towards peace, democracy, economic progress and social justice', Barcelona, 6-7/11/2005

The Euromed Trade Union Forum (1) met on 6-7 November in Barcelona, to evaluate the first 10 years of EU-Mediterranean cooperation and analyse future prospects for the EU's new neighbourhood policy. The trade union organisations taking part recognised that the achievements of the Barcelona Process so far have fallen short of the objectives set in 1995. However, partnership remains the right path to follow in the context of a difficult economic and political situation. The Barcelona Process must be strengthened and revitalised. At the same time, they re-emphasised that democracy is the only framework allowing the development of workers' rights, social rights, and social dialogue.

On [28-29 November](#), a Summit took place in Barcelona, organised by the UK Presidency, to celebrate 10 years of the Barcelona Process.



(1) The Euromed Trade Union Forum was created in 1999. It brings together organisations affiliated to the ETUC, to the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), to the Trade Union Confederation of Arab Magreb Workers (USTMA) and to the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (CISA). Its aim is to defend and develop the social dimension of the Euromed partnership (economic, social and democratic rights).



[Programme of the Euromed trade union conference](#)

[Final declaration of the Euromed trade union conference](#)

ETUC Steering Committee – 14/11/2005

The ETUC Steering Committee met on 14 November in Brussels. There were two main items on the agenda: 1) how to react after the European Council at Hampton Court. There were fresh discussions about the proposal for a brochure, debated at the Executive Committee on October 2005. The participants stressed the importance of having this material and above all of disseminating it at the national level; 2) a preliminary discussion on the transitional provisions applicable to the free movement of workers coming from the new Member States. The discussions were to be continued at the meeting of the Executive Committee in December.

In his various communications, the ETUC general secretary also touched upon the riots that took place recently in some French suburbs. He referred to some of the main issues in EU current affairs, such as the recent macroeconomic dialogue meeting, the decision by the European Central Bank (ECB) to increase interest rates and the Services directive, the REACH regulation, the imminent World Trade Organisation (WTO) negotiations, and above all, the vote on the financial perspectives on the agenda for the forthcoming European Summit.

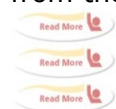
[Back](#) <<

'European Trade Justice'. ETUC-NGO partnership, Brussels - 21/11/2005

The ETUC and some NGOs staged a symbolic action on 21 November to call for 'Trade justice – not free trade' to tie in with the summit of the trade ministers, who were meeting in Brussels in the run-up to the forthcoming trade negotiations of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on 13-18/12 in Hong Kong. This action, part of the GCAP (Global Action Call Against Poverty) campaign, which began in 2004, aimed to show that the citizens of Europe want the WTO negotiations to contribute to social justice. Mr Hilary Benn, UK Secretary of State for International Development and Mr Ian Pearson, UK Minister of State for Trade, received a delegation from the ETUC and NGOs who presented the main political messages of the coalition.



Mr Hilary Benn, UK Secretary of State for International Development and Mr Ian Pearson, UK Minister of State for Trade, received a delegation from the ETUC and NGOs who presented the main political messages of the coalition.



[ETUC press release](#)

[ETUC resolution on the 6th WTO ministerial conference](#)

[Event photo gallery](#)

ETUC Executive Committee – 05-06/12/2005

The ETUC Executive Committee met on 5 and 6 December, with European current affairs and social dialogue as the key agenda items. The members of the Committee approved two resolutions on [the coordination of collective bargaining in 2006](#) and [the financial perspectives 2007-2013](#). On that subject, the Executive Committee expressed its indignation at the document presented by the UK Presidency on 5 December. Likewise, it approved a [statement on services in the internal market](#), calling upon the European Parliament to overhaul radically the draft directive at the plenary session vote. On social dialogue, the ETUC secretariat reported on the progress of the discussions on the work programme of the European social partners for the period 2006-2008. A common ETUC position on the transitional provisions on the free movement of workers from the new Member States was also adopted. The ETUC Executive Committee approved the report and recommendations coming out of the 3rd general assembly of the [Euromed](#) trade union forum. Finally, the European trade union movement welcomes two new members: [Unio - The Confederation of Unions for Professionals](#), Norway, and the Andorra Trade Union (USDA).

Free movement: ETUC mobilises to defend fundamental trade union rights in free movement cases – 06/12/2005

The ETUC is backing trade unions in different parts of Europe involved in conflicts over the free movement of labour. The outcome will have a crucial impact on workers' rights to collective bargaining and industrial action.

The first and best-known case concerns Swedish unions that took action against the Latvian construction company Laval over the working conditions of Latvian workers refurbishing a school in the town of [Vaxholm](#). The Swedish government backed the union view, in defence of standards established by collective agreement. But the case is now before the European Court of Justice (ECJ), where a judgment is not expected before 2007. The two other cases – Viking in Finland and Irish Ferries in Ireland – concern the 'reflagging' of ferries in EU waters, leading to a drastic cut in working conditions. Irish Ferries has already been replacing its staff with lower-paid workers from the new Member States, imposing long hours and three-month tours of duty. The ETUC has set up a Task Force on the Vaxholm and Viking cases, with input from the trade unions directly involved, to examine the legal implications.

At the same time, it is urging all affiliates to put pressure on their national governments to defend transnational trade union solidarity and the fundamental right to take industrial action – a right that should take clear precedence over internal market rules. Member States have until 31 January 2006 to make their submissions to the ECJ, and this is a crucial deadline for influencing the legal judgment.

The outcomes of these cases will have far-reaching implications for trade unions and workers in Europe, and are closely linked to ongoing campaigns such as the Services Directive.

[Back <<<](#)

EU Agenda

November - December 2005

●	14-17/11/2005	Education, Youth and Culture Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	14-17/11/2005	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session agenda
●	21-22/11/2005	General affairs and External relations Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	24/11/2005	ECOFIN Council - Budget (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	27-28/11/2005	Euromed 10 th anniversary Summit (Barcelona, Spain)	Summit programme
●	28-29/11/2005	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	30/11/2005-01/12/2005	'Mini-plenary' session at European Parliament (Brussels)	Plenary session agenda
●	01/12/2005	European Union Summit - Ukraine	Summit agenda
●	1-2/12/2005	EU Presidency Conference on corporate social responsibility (London, United Kingdom)	Conference agenda
●	02/12/2005	Environment Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	06/12/2005	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	08/12/2005	Employment, Social affairs, Health and Consumers Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	09/12/2005	Health Council	Council agenda
●	12/12/2005	General affairs and External relations Council (Brussels)	Council agenda
●	12-15/12/2005	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session agenda
●	13-18/12/2005	6 th WTO ministerial conference (Hong Kong)	WTO conference programme
●	15-16/12/2005	European Council (Brussels)	European Council agenda
●	16-19/01/2006	Plenary session at European Parliament (Strasbourg)	Plenary session agenda

[Back <<<](#)

ETUC Agenda

November - December 2005

- | | | | |
|---|---------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| ● | 14/11/2005 | ETUC Steering Committee (EESC, Brussels) | |
| ● | 15-18/11/2005 | CFTC congress (Bordeaux, France) | Congress programme |
| ● | 17-18/11/2005 | ETUC-TUC conference 'Challenging times:
Innovative ways of organising working time: The
role of trade unions' (London) | Conference programme |
| ● | 21/11/2005 | European action for trade justice (Brussels) | Action programme |
| ● | 21-22/11/2005 | SACO congress (Sweden) | Congress programme |
| ● | 21-23/11/2005 | CMT congress (Houffalize, Belgium) | Congress programme |
| ● | 24-25/11/2005 | EUROCADRES congress (Brussels) | Congress programme |
| ● | 05/12/2005 | ETUC Steering Committee (EESC, Brussels) | |
| ● | 5-6/12/2005 | ETUC Executive Committee (EESC, Brussels) | |
| ● | 06/12/2005 | ETUC press conference (Brussels) | |
| ● | 09/12/2005 | Extraordinary LIGA congress (Budapest, Hungary) | Congress programme |

[Back <<](#)

Communications

Press conference on the Services Directive – 06/12/2005

The ETUC Executive Committee ended with a press conference on the Services Directive attended by 20 or so journalists. John Monks, the ETUC General Secretary, Harri Taliga, the President of the Association of Estonian Trade Unions (EAKL) and Janus Sniadek, the President of NSZZ Solidarnosc (Poland) expressed the unanimous opposition of the European trade union movement to the draft Services Directive. The conference also heard that the ETUC will organise a European demonstration in Strasbourg [on 14 February 2006, the day before the European Parliament plenary session vote.](#)

[ETUC statement on the Services directive](#)

Publications

We inform you of the release of the following publications:

ETUC publications:

- **Framework agreement on stress at work.** *ETUC Interpretation guide.* Maria-Helena André, Sinead Tiernan, Stefan Clauwaert, Roland Gauthy, Isabelle Schömann. November 2005, 40 pages.

Other publications:

- **Trade union financing.** Groupe Liaisons. Collection 'Les synthèses'. 2005, 80 pages.
- **Towards a trade union Europe?** A survey on the European Trade Union Confederation, Anne-Catherine Wagner, Broissieux, Editions du Croquant, 2005, 159 pages.

Call to demonstration

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) is calling for a major demonstration about the Services Directive **on 14 February 2006 in Strasbourg.**

[ETUC appeal](#)

[Back ««](#)

Interview

We talk to Joël Decaillon, ETUC Confederal Secretary

The responsibilities of Joël Decaillon, who was elected as Confederal Secretary of the ETUC at the Congress in Prague in May 2003, include issues relating to the environment, trade negotiations and globalisation.



1) What do you think of the compromise secured at the European Parliament (EP) and the Council decision on REACH?

JD: It is a compromise that has shown the extraordinary importance of the debate with the very strong involvement of the players concerned. For the trade union movement, the Parliament compromise represents an important positive aspect, because the document approved is in line with a principle which is close to our hearts: the precautionary principle. In addition, it maintains the burden of proof on the side of industry in terms of information on the risks associated with chemical substances and their reduction. By preserving this duty of care, the EP is supporting the REACH project's declared aim of traceability of chemical substances. On the contrary, in the agreement adopted by the Competitiveness Council, the principle of obligatory substitution - which had survived the 1st reading in the European Parliament - is lost. For the ETUC, this represents a significant retreat compared to REACH's initial ambitions in terms of workers' health protection. Without a strong element of compulsion, the number of companies undertaking to abandon the production of dangerous substances in favour of safer alternatives runs the risk of being very limited.

2) What is the next step?

JD: At any rate, we are involved in a co-decision process and the REACH regulation will therefore undergo a second reading and possibly a co-decision procedure at EP level. We hope that the second reading in the European Parliament will offer the opportunity to strengthen the draft in order to achieve a better balance between costs and benefits. The matter is very far from settled. Clearly, the chemical industry has shown some signs of discontent. We would like to be sure that the changes in government in Germany, in particular, do not mirror this discontent.

3) According to business, the system provided under REACH would have significant cost implications or even mean job losses. Do you think that such fears are justified?

JD: The impact studies conducted at the request of industry in a high-level group in which the unions were represented have shown that the consequences were very slight. From that point of view - the position of Parliament was therefore interesting - there was a need to set up mechanisms to support and accompany SMEs, for there were some risks for them. If we respect the position adopted in Parliament, we can curb those risks. But for big business, impact studies have shown that the risks were extremely limited.

4) The draft REACH regulation is one of the top priorities of the European trade union movement. Could you tell us why?

JD: When the Commission mooted this regulation, the first reaction among Europe's employers was to say that it was liable to seriously compromise the international competitiveness of the European chemical industry, with a very negative impact on employment. The trade union movement, whose prime responsibility is to defend jobs, cannot ignore the importance of maintaining a high level of employment and preserving international competitiveness. At the same time, neither can it ignore safety conditions for staff and users. The fact that the trade union movement has adopted a balanced stance, considering that the principles of precaution, the reversal of the burden of proof and transparency are key principles for all economic development, is significant. I would say that it is all the more significant for the fact that in the very near future, biotechnologies

and nanotechnologies will become essential, and thus the principles of transparency and traceability will be equally relevant for all humanity. We also have to remember that the ETUC stance was a reference position for a large number of MEPs in the closing days of the debate at the EP.

5) Why did Europe need new rules on chemical products?

JD: When Europe embarked on this operation, what it actually wanted to do was to lend coherence and visibility to the rules that already existed. In addition, there were a number of major accidents, such as AZF in Toulouse (France), not to mention all the problems with the risk of pollution and a lot of questions from the public. In a Europe where the main engine is democracy, there is a certain legitimacy in reinforcing the character of transparency. The fact that Europe has high standards may be of strong benefit for the future development of the chemical industry in the world. This is not only a moral advantage, but it might be a truly decisive industrial advantage.

6) What benefits does REACH offer Europe's workers?

JD: The great gain coming out of REACH if it maintains a high level of traceability and transparency is that it will tell us precisely what compounds go into products, and thus enable us to change the way risks are assessed in terms of occupational illnesses, in particular for employees. It is extremely difficult today for some users to find out exactly what risks they are running. REACH will foster a more detailed debate for the users (both the end users and the intermediary users) as well as ensuring that the negotiations conducted are much more rigorous in terms of health and safety.

7) After the French and Dutch 'No' votes on the European Constitution, the European debate seems to be evaporating, while at the same time we seem to be seeing a renationalisation of political debates. Do you feel that REACH could represent the rebirth of the European debate?

JD: It doesn't mark a rebirth in itself, but at the same time it does show that the answers, notably in environmental terms, cannot simply be addressed at the national level. The European level is relevant when tackling all the aspects linked to a fresh understanding of development, environmental guarantees, and safety in both the chemical and food contexts, as well as in intellectual property or the new technologies (biotechnologies or nanotechnologies). REACH represents an acknowledgement that many answers are multinational and that renationalisation would thus be quite pointless in the face of these demands.

8) To what extent might the European Union force its commercial partners to comply with REACH?

JD: Imported products will have to meet the European standards. The US government had intervened in the debate around REACH via its embassies, knowing full well that if Europe adopts measures for transparency and traceability, the demands of American consumers and the American people will ultimately force the American chemical industry to follow suit. There will be a significant knock-on effect. Is this knock-on effect enough, or will it be enough? The question remains open.

9) The Ministerial Conference of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) was held in Hong Kong, from 13 to 18 December. What the ETUC was expecting?

JD: It was a difficult conference, coming as it did after two failures, those in Doha and Cancun. The Hong Kong conference thus had symbolic importance in terms of the ability of the WTO to be one of the instruments in global trade regulation. In contrast to the widely held view, the WTO showed some difficulties in its ability to resolve the problems of modern regulation. For the trade union movement, the objective was to see how these negotiations could make it possible to strengthen democracy and transparency in international governance. The trade union movement sees the need for a much closer relationship between the WTO and the UN agencies, be it the ILO, the WHO, the FAO, the UNCED, UNESCO, etc. I think there is a great deal of relevance to the idea proposed a few years ago by Jacques Delors, to set up a Global Economic and Social Security Council. The WTO is not outside this debate. However, employment was largely absent in this deal. No instruments have been put forward for measuring the impact on jobs of the agreements in the three pillars: agriculture, non-agricultural market access, and services. Furthermore,

once again governments have refused to include a reference to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and to social rights and employment standards. The violation of fundamental civil, political and social rights is still not recognised as a violation of the international political order and thus of the agreements of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). Today, despite this string of conferences, we are no further forwards. Consequently, the demand from the entire international trade union movement, under the aegis of Global Union, which brings together the major international confederations, the professional federations and the ETUC, is to give priority to employment and decent work, and we shall tirelessly strive to promote the Singapore declaration (1996) with regard to labour law.

10) On 21 November last, the ETUC and a number of NGOs demonstrated before the Council to call for 'Trade justice – not free trade'. What exactly do you understand by 'trade justice'?

JD: Trade justice means development aid. The prime question was to find out what instrument the WTO was going to equip itself with for development aid. This aspect was theoretically on the agenda for the Hong Kong conference, but it is clear that the stance on farming was the crucial element. The diversity in the situations around the world complicates the debate, and there is no single answer. We have to evaluate the situation in the African countries, where things are different from China, which in turn is not the same as Latin America or Europe. A major upheaval hit the WTO with the entry of China, which radically changed the balance of power, and that is without underestimating the arrival of the emerging countries such as Brazil. It is clear today that all sides need to reaffirm their determination to help the most disadvantaged countries. This is no easy task in a context of increased international competitiveness. Another symbolic element is that this conference was held in Hong Kong. In the view of the ETUC, helping development also means helping to secure respect for fundamental rights: this is an issue of particular relevance in the case of China.

11) What do you think about the European Union's approach at the Hong Kong conference?

JD: The European Union (EU), in accepting a deadline for ending agricultural and export subsidies in 2013, is a long way from achieving similar action by the United States (in particular on cotton) and Japan. The political weakness of the EU was more and more evident. Its isolation throughout the week, and its difficulty in activating new alliances with the developing countries represented by the G-90 group, is worrying. Had the Constitutional Treaty been accepted, the EU could have profited from the fundamental rights in the Treaty to make such political, civil, social and environmental rights into a strategic element. It can still do this, through the Charter on Fundamental Rights, but without any binding force. The second element is that the EU, which has set in place a system of impact studies on all its European projects, needs to have the same demands at the global level, notably in terms of the impact of liberalisation. It seems rather odd to have high standards with regard to impact studies at the European level and not to have the same approach at international level. Thirdly, the EU needs to achieve significant coherence between its international trade policies and its internal policies, especially at a time when it is talking about relaunching industrial policies in Europe via the establishment of a restructuring fund. The EU needs coherence when it comes to both its agricultural policy and its international policy. From that point of view, the debate has doubtless been opened extremely swiftly by the EU, which is not giving it a great deal of room for negotiations at present.

Under the GCAP programme, the trade union movement and the NGOs staged a major demonstration ahead of the Hong Kong summit to publicise their views on the demands linked to employment, decent work and the fight against poverty.

Editorial team

Managing editor: John Monks
Editor-in-chief: Patricia Grillo
Editors: Daniele Melli, Kate Holman

ETUC WISHES YOU:



Prejeme Vam Vesele Vanoce a Stastny novy rok

Chestita Koleda i Shtastliva Nova Godina

Sretan Bozic

Glædelig Jul og godt nyttår

Vrolijk Kerstfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuwjaar!

Merry Christmas & Happy New Year

Rõõmsaid Jõulupühi ja Head uut aastat

Hyvää Joulua or Hauskaa Joulua - Onnellista uutta vuotta

Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!

Fröhliche Weihnachten und ein glückliches Neues Jahr!

Kala Christougenna Ki'eftihismenos O Kenourios Chronos

Kellemes karácsonyi ünnepeket és Boldog újévet!

Gleðileg Jól og Farsaelt Komandi ár!

Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo

Prieci'gus Ziemsve'tkus un Laimi'gu Jauno Gadu

Linksmu Kaledu ir laimingu Nauju metu

Srekan Bozik I Nova Godina

Nixtieqlek Milied Tajjeb u Sena Tajba

God Jul og Godt Nyttår

Wesolych Swiat i Szczesliwego Nowego Roku

Boas Festas e um feliz Ano Novo

Craciun fericit si un An Nou fericit!

Sretan Bozic. Vesela Nova Godine

Vesele Vianoce a stastny novy rok

Vesele bozicne praznike in srecno novo leto

Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo

God Jul och Gott Nytt År

Noeliniz Ve Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun

