

ETUC Strategy and Action Plan 2007-2011 The Executive Summary

"Towards a Seville Manifesto" *

1. The ETUC remains absolutely committed to a Europe which is both "more" and "better"; a Europe which is integrated around rights and values including peace, liberty, democracy, fundamental rights, equality, sustainable development, full employment and decent work, social dialogue, the protection of minorities, universal and equal access to high quality public services, and a successful economy which supports social progress and employment protection. Action is also vital to maintain a proper balance between the original Lisbon objectives of growth, environmental progress and social cohesion. This balance will be lost without a renewed commitment to Social Europe. And Europe must move to tackle the competition between member states to lower tax rates, especially corporate taxes, and to cut social and employment protection. Only this way will we stop the slide towards 'a race to the bottom'.
2. The Seville Congress is therefore, for the ETUC, a new stage in our development towards an organisation which is stronger, more cohesive, and more influential in benefiting the workers of Europe and the world. Moving on to the offensive needs an organisation which can criticise and mobilise, of course, but can also propose, negotiate, and act. Strengthening European trade unionism and the capacities of the ETUC will therefore be central to the task of making our offensive effective and productive.
3. An offensive is necessary. The ETUC faces a series of challenges on the political, economic, environmental and social fronts. These challenges are complex. But set against earlier challenges faced with success by our predecessors (including mass unemployment and poverty, the ravages of war, post war reconstruction, establishing peace in Europe since 1945, and the later overthrowing of dictatorships and the re-unification of Europe) we must never doubt our generation's ability to succeed in our time in overcoming our challenges. So what are they?
4. In the **political** sphere, there is evidence that enthusiasm for the European Union has declined in some countries, and also of more scepticism about the creation of a stronger, more integrated Europe. Indeed, to some trade unions, Europe risks being seen as the cutting edge of globalisation's worst effects, whereby jobs are emigrating to cheaper locations, and people are immigrating, often

* This will be revised in the light of decisions at Congress and the final text of 'The Seville Manifesto' will be presented for adoption at the concluding session of Congress.

prepared to work for lower rates than the local populations. The result is a developing public mood which is more susceptible to the simplicities of nationalist and protectionist rhetoric than to the more complex processes of strengthening European integration; and there is a mood less willing to recognise that globalisation has benefits, as well as drawbacks.

5. In the **economic** sphere, unemployment has been high in many countries; and while there has been recent, welcome improvements, many of the new jobs are precarious and low paid. Additionally, real wage growth been negligible in some key countries. More generally, in nearly all high income countries, the share of wages and salaries in the gross domestic product has been declining. It is also evident that there is a trend towards more and more short-termism among financial investors, with private equity, hedge funds and others treating enterprises, primarily, as vehicles for speculation, rather than investing in new products, new services, high productivity, and sustainable technologies. With macro-economic policy being contained by the European Central Bank within the current rules for the euro, Europe is struggling to generate growth to match other existing and emerging economic powers in the world.
6. **Environmentally**, there is heightened awareness among Europe's citizens of the threats posed by global warming. But to date, the efforts made to combat this by the European authorities do not equal the scale of the challenge. Europe should be in the lead in tackling these problems; in some areas, like regulation of dangerous chemicals, it is. Progress at European level was also made recently on expanding sources of renewable energy. But generally, there are wide variations between member states and too little concerted action at European level. De-regulation has been a dominant theme of the current European Commission and this has impeded progress on environmental questions.
7. **Social** Europe too has been a casualty of the overriding belief in de-regulation. Virtually no new legal measures to support European workers have been introduced over the past 4 years. A majority of the Commission, most employers, and some member states have combined to stop progress on measures such as working time and temporary agency workers. Indeed, at times, some Governments have questioned whether there is a Social Europe at all, ignoring the 60 or so legal measures which have been introduced already on health and safety, European Works Councils, equality and information and consultation. Instead they have argued that Europe does not need a social dimension, carelessly forgetting the need to win popular support for the project of European integration.
8. The result is that Europe has been damaged recently. Social Europe has been crucial to a successful Europe in previous years. It must become so again and the ETUC's Strategy and Action Plan points the way.

The ETUC plans to go on the offensive on five broad fronts:

1. For a European labour market with:

- more and better jobs and full employment;
- European standards in areas such as working conditions, trade union rights, and health and safety.
- **Combat and reverse the rising trend towards precarious work;**
- **campaign for rising minimum wages and real pay increases for European workers;**
- **prioritise the elimination of the wage gap between men and women;**
- **fight 'délocalisation', stimulate negotiations on restructuring and provide a stronger framework of information, consultation and involvement, including involving independent experts on restructuring;**
- **always promote equality and gender mainstreaming; always fight racism, discrimination and xenophobia;**
- **strive for a better framework of mobility of Europe's workers based on the principle of equal treatment in the place where the work is done, or the service provided;**
- **promote a pro-active migration policy, opening legal channels for migration, while combating labour exploitation of migrant workers including undocumented migrants**
- **campaign for union rights to take strike action at transnational level;**
- **capture the flexicurity debate from those aiming to cut employment protection and unemployment benefit;**
- **promote better social protection and welfare states with comprehensive services for minimum income, pensions, health, long-term care, lifelong learning, sick and unemployment benefits, active labour market and child care; and positive action to handle the ageing population of Europe;**

- **fight for the strengthening of existing Directives on working time (the end to the opt-out), European Works Councils and posted workers, and for the adoption of a strong Temporary Agency Workers Directive.**

2. For social dialogue, collective bargaining and worker participation

- **promote a higher quality social dialogue and a European level of dispute resolution;**
- **more intense consideration of how to develop and co-ordinate European level collective bargaining, including at sectoral, cross border, and transnational company levels, and supporting the work of the European Industry Federations;**
- **strengthen collective bargaining over the borders in Europe to improve each others' bargaining position and end 'beggar my neighbour' approaches;**
- **develop better conditions for European Works Councils and promote worker participation;**
- **campaign for much higher standards of corporate governance, based on recognition of the interests of all the stakeholders not just shareholders, and also for more commitment to real corporate social responsibility;**
- **Expose and combat "casino capitalism" and short-termism more generally, by taxation, regulation and worker involvement.**

3. For more effective European economic, social and environmental governance including

- **give new life to the Lisbon strategy and redefine urgently its terms of reference and place in European construction;**
- **develop a macro-economic policy framework which encourages growth and innovation, uses a higher inflation target and aims for an exchange rate which is more growth friendly;**
- **promote effective co-ordination of taxation policies;**
- **allocate a bigger European budget especially to help with enlargement and solidarity between regions and countries;**

- build stronger public services within a new European framework;
- develop industrial and innovation strategies including sustainable technologies, high productivity, a highly qualified workforce, recognition of the enduring importance of European manufacturing, major spending increases on research and development, and a better regulation agenda based not only on economic, but also on social and ecological criteria;
- promote a more sustainable Europe through 'smart' growth strategies, different production and consumption patterns, and meeting the Kyoto targets on carbon emissions; and make environmental and energy related issues part of the mainstream trade union agenda.

4. For a stronger EU with

- a defence of the substance of the Constitutional treaty, especially the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and the trade union rights to organise and to strike;
- a positive approach to enlargement towards the Balkans and Turkey based on full compliance with the requirements of EU membership and with fundamental rights including trade union rights; generous neighbourhood policies to the east of Europe, and in the Mediterranean; and co-operation with the other regions of the world;
- an approach to trade which includes respect for rights and ILO standards, promotes jobs in Europe, opposes the use of trade to promote aggressive liberalisation in developing countries, and seeks more coherence between trade policy and development, social and environmental objectives;
- an external policy based on defence of peace, adherence to the UN and its constitution, respect for the rule of law, the use of 'soft' power to promote democracy and human rights, and total condemnation of terrorism;
- the development of a genuine EU Common Foreign Policy and Security Policy.

5. For stronger unions and a stronger ETUC

- **develop a strategy of organisation to help affiliates increase the numbers of members;**
- **construct a stronger ETUC, more able to lead campaigns and to promote more solidarity;**
- **work with the ITUC and its Pan European Regional Council, and also with the Global Unions Federations and TUAC, to build a trade union organisation which is more cohesive and influential in the world.**