


# COMMUNIQUÉ



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

## 25th Anniversary

The Foundation celebrates its 25th birthday this year. Founded in May 1975, by Council Regulation, it is an autonomous body of the European Union. During this period, the Foundation has built up its reputation as a centre of expertise at European level on issues relating to living and working conditions. According to Eric Verborgh, acting director, the 25th anniversary coincides with a period of change and assessment which he views as an opportunity to consolidate its past work, strengthen its organisation and prepare for new challenges. 

## Address to MEPs

Eric Verborgh, acting director of the Foundation, addressed the Employment and Social Affairs Committee of the European Parliament on the 29 November last in Brussels.


The presentation familiarised new members of the Committee with the structure and work of the Foundation, the 1999 elections having introduced a high percentage of new members to the Parliament, and provided the entire Committee with an overview of the current programme of work.

Eric Verborgh highlighted the many aspects of the Foundation's research, debate and information activities which are of particular interest to the social partners and policy-makers for informing themselves on issues relevant to living and working conditions.

He spoke about the need to equate what workers, and potential workers, wanted and what the labour market needed; the Foundation's focus on the qualitative aspects of work rather than the availability of jobs including such issues as equal opportunities, part time and temporary employment and working time and the Foundation's surveys on working conditions which monitors the changing conditions throughout Europe.

*Eric Verborgh with the Foundation staff, raises the 25th Anniversary flag*



The Committee is an important target audience for the Foundation. Bartho Pronk MEP was appointed to continue to act as a political liaison with the Foundation. Simon Duffin of the committee's secretariat will ensure the administrative liaison between the committee and the Foundation. The meeting was well attended and a number of searching questions were asked. Some members said that they did not know enough about the Foundation's work and were of the opinion that dissemination activities should be intensified. Eric Verborgh welcomed the members' requests to have more information and responded positively to a suggestion from the floor that the Committee hold one of its future meetings at the Foundation. 

## EWON

ESF (European Social Fund) and EWON (European Work Organisation Network) held a joint meeting which focused on the implementation of the new ESF guidelines on work organisation issues and on the work of EWON. The meeting was organised by the European Commission in Brussels on 6-7 December and opened by Allan Larsson, the Director General of Employment and Social Affairs DG. Kevin O'Kelly, research manager, represented the Foundation. Presentations were made on new ESF regulations; on a variety of ADAPT projects and on the national experiences of EWON members in Finland, Germany, Ireland, Portugal and Sweden. 

### In this issue:

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# Employment and Competitiveness

Many issues are involved in the broad debate on how to tackle effectively the problem of the persistent high level of unemployment. However, it is agreed at European level that Member States must work together to solve the problems of unemployment. One of the relevant initiatives in this context are attempts to use a partnership approach for the improvement of employment and competitiveness: so-called pacts for employment and competitiveness (PECs), which are the subject of a new concept paper published by the Foundation. *Pacts for Employment and Competitiveness, Concepts and Issues* is the first publication which investigates the key theoretical issues, the analytical framework, and the motives of the main protagonists for supporting negotiations on PECs in Europe.

## A new approach

As reported in the paper: "PECs are collective agreements dealing with the relationship between employment and competitiveness, as they try to combine new developments in industrial relations with an active labour market policy, fiscal policy and industrial policy".

## Broadening collective bargaining

As opposed to the traditional theory of the neo-classical labour market, in which labour demand is determined by the level of wages and change is left entirely to market mechanisms, PECs represent an attempt to broaden collective bargaining in order to include competitive and co-operative forms

of agreement among the social partners. However, another view regards the negotiations of PECs as little more than a form of one-sided "concession bargaining" by the trade unions.

## Nature and extent

The publication is the first step of a project launched in 1998 by the Foundation which studies the nature and the extent of PECs at the sector and company/workplace level. Eleven Member States are involved in the project: Denmark, Germany, Spain, France, Ireland, Italy, Netherlands, Austria, Finland, Sweden and the United Kingdom. The first overview report on the scope, forms, contents, effects and processes to implement PECs will be available in Spring 2000.

## National analysis

Individual analyses of the situation at the national level will follow and will be based on the results of the reports compiled by national researchers who will supply three to five case studies for each country. The intention is to increase awareness and understanding among the social partners and at the same time to draw lessons and advice which will be helpful to policy makers and negotiators in order for them to acquire new insights.

*Pacts for Employment and Competitiveness Concepts and Issues* is written by Keith Sisson, Jacques Freyssinet, Hubert Krieger, Kevin O'Kelly, Claus Schnabel and Hartmut Seifert.

## Work and health

Timo Kauppinen, research manager at the Foundation, made a presentation on "The Future of Work in the Information Society" at a conference on "The Information Society - a Challenge to Health and Safety at Work". This conference was organised by The European Agency for Safety and Health at Work, the Nordic Institute for Advanced Training in Occupational Health (NIVA) and the National Institute for Working Life (Sweden) and took place in Bilbao on 17-19 January 2000.

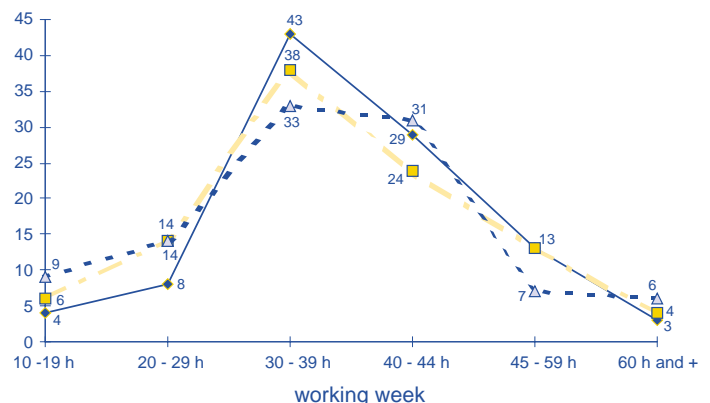
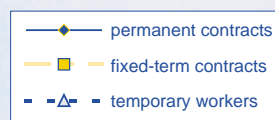
## Project development

National reports in the Foundation study, *Employment Family and Community Activities: A new balance between women and men*, have been submitted by the eight participating countries (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, The Netherlands and UK), concluding the first phase of the project.

Conclusions and recommendations from the studies and their implications for policy were discussed at a recent research meeting. Key findings on employment creation in household services, the workers and their working conditions and successful experiences within the household service sector were outlined. Equal opportunities between women and men and actions to promote reconciliation of work with family and community activities are an integral part of the study. The European synthesis report will be prepared for publication in the first half of 2000. It will identify measures to improve employability, quality of work and service provision within this sector.

## research in figures

### Working hours



Source: Second European Survey on Working Conditions

# Information management

Communication is a primary function of the Foundation. It was established specifically to "increase and disseminate knowledge". The Foundation's organisational structure is being re-aligned to ensure equal emphasis is placed on the gathering and on the analysis of information and on the communication of that information to the target audiences. Information managers, Fiona Murray, Bríd Nolan, and Mattanja de Boer, are responsible for information management at the Foundation. Part of the re-alignment will ensure a more integrated approach between information staff and research staff.

## Two-way communication

"Communication remains a two-way process. The Foundation has to know its audience and supply information accordingly. Dissemination is constantly under review. Given the nature of the research which is relevant to such a wide spectrum of interests - in the area of living and working conditions - dissemination must be tightly controlled to ensure maximum efficiency.

"An essential element of our strategy is a physical presence in Europe: attendance at major conferences to present papers, addressing ministerial conferences, organising workshops and formal and informal meetings provide the Foundation with an invaluable opportunity to interact with its priority audience," says Bríd Nolan, information manager with responsibility for public affairs. The Foundation's target audiences are: the institutions of the EU, the social partners and voluntary organisations at EU level and other EU and international organisations in the same field. Other important targets are the research community, infomediaries and the media.

"Reaching the audience is not just a matter of putting information into circulation. There is enormous cultural diversity within the EU on how different audiences receive and perceive information and different groups also look in different places for their information. These have to be taken into

account in dissemination," according to Bríd Nolan.

"The Foundation focuses on medium to long-term policy issues; it anticipates issues which will later come on the political agenda. Some of its work therefore is upstream of perceived needs. Nonetheless, we have to get the information out so that the initial phase of conscious-raising is put into effect. This is an area in which we tend to rely on the Foundation's contributions to formal and informal meetings and briefings to circulate the information. If we have anticipated correctly at the information gathering phase, we are well positioned to communicate that information when it arrives on the agenda later"



*Fiona Murray, Bríd Nolan and Mattanja de Boer, information managers*

## New technologies

As well as actively seeking to inform its target audience, the Foundation deals with substantial information demands. New technologies both stimulate and service this demand. Electronic access has created an unprecedented level of enquires. Users also have high expectations of quick delivery of information synthesised to meet their needs. "The continuing challenge is to stay up to date with new technologies. When you make a choice in the information technology area, it has implications for what you can do afterwards. There are very few decisions that are stand alone so you have to consider all the implications." says Fiona Murray, information manager with responsibility for information and documentation. The Foundation continues to develop its electronic networks, its website with areas

dedicated to specific research areas such as the European Works Councils and the Sustainable Development Directory and EIROnline, the European industrial relations database.

## Resource database

Once information is gathered, it is essential that it is put to the most effective use and is accessible to others. The Foundation will have a new "resource" database up and running by Spring 2000 which will hold all research results and will make its information more freely available than previously possible.

"There has been considerable preparatory work: the guidelines for authors, designing templates, getting external authors to use our templates to ensure that the data is in a retrievable and searchable format.

It means quicker processing of the material and gives us more flexible publishing options. Storing publications electronically increases their shelf life; they stay current for longer after publication," says Fiona Murray.

Making better use internally of available information and monitoring information gathered by others are areas Fiona Murray would like to see further developed at the Foundation. Researchers need to work on the basis of complete information so that you can benefit from research which has already been carried out, avoid duplication and be aware of gaps in knowledge. 🌐

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## events diary

18-19 Feb

Seminar and press conference - Pacts for Employment and Competitiveness, Rome

21-23 Feb

Meeting on future co-operation between CEEP and Foundation at Foundation, Dublin

22 March

62nd Meeting of the Administration Board of the Foundation in Dublin

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## Publications mentioned

**Combating Age Barriers in Employment Summary**  
Available in ES DA DE EN FR IT NL PT FI SV  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**Linking Welfare and Work**  
Available in EN  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**New Approaches to Improve the Health of a Changing Workforce**  
Available in EN  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**New Directions in Social Welfare**  
Available in EN and FR  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**Pacts for Employment and Competitiveness: Concepts and Issues**  
Available in EN – to be published also in DE FR IT  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

## New publications

**EIRObserver 1/00**  
Available online on the EIRO website at [www.eiro.eurofound.ie](http://www.eiro.eurofound.ie)

**Sustainable Development: Practical Initiatives for Policy Makers and the Social Partners**  
Available in EN – to be published in all EU languages  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**Times in the City and Quality of Life Summary**  
Available in EN – to be published in all EU languages  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

**Work Programme 2000**  
Available in EN – to be published in all EU languages  
[www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie)

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## EIRO developments

The Foundation is commissioning a leading electronic publishing concern, PIRA (Publishing Industry Research Association) to undertake a study of EIRO, the European industrial relations database. They will team up with a research group which looks at human factors in computing from University College Cork to find out from users and some potential users what they like and dislike about the service. In particular, they will be assessing the content: the style in which its written; the language; the balance between countries; the level of detail and usability of the website, as well as what additional features users might like. 🌐

## Changes in health

Within the occupational health field there has been a growing realisation of the need for change in public health strategies, prompted by the changes in the nature of work and the emergence of new health related outcomes such as stress. The emerging trends and issues in workplace health policy and practice is the focus of a new report, *New Approaches to Improve the Health of a Changing Workforce*, which has been published by the Foundation. The report examines new thinking and practices in seven European countries: Finland, France, Ireland, Germany, the UK, Spain and the Netherlands. The study is based on interviews with practitioners in each country and an extensive literature review. It identifies new approaches to workplace health issues which are responding to the challenges posed by economic and social change which all Member States will face in the short to medium term. Issues and policies such as changes in regulations, social insurance, new hazards and new at-risk groups are examined in the differing national contexts. The report was written by Dr Richard Wynne and Dr Robert Grundemann and is available online at [www.eurofound.ie](http://www.eurofound.ie). 🌐

## Active welfare

Work is progressing on the Foundation's research project examining integrated approaches to active welfare and employment policies. The first meeting of researchers from 11 participating countries (Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal, Spain and the UK) took place in December last.

The project is concentrating on co-ordination of activation policies for minimum income recipients. The focus is on the experiences of people of working age in receipt of social assistance/minimum income. Increasingly this group is exposed to activation schemes and to the efforts of both employment and social protection services. Frequently support is also provided by housing, education, health and other services.

The research is designed to be practical and problem-solving. It is examining the co-ordination of policies and services at all levels of planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. It will identify mechanisms for effective co-ordination of activation measures and access their impact on their client groups.

The European synthesis report based on this work will be prepared in Autumn 2000. 🌐

## Paris conference

Pascal Paoli and Robert Anderson, research managers, made presentations of Foundation studies relating to the changing nature of working conditions and the management of an ageing workforce in Europe to a conference organised by the European Commission in its headquarters in Paris on 2 December.

The conference was attended by representatives of French ministries, the press, trade unions, employers groups and research institutions. The presentations were followed by a question and answer session. 🌐

## communiqué

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