

COMMUNIQUÉ



EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions

Monitoring centre takes shape

Launching the development phase of the European Monitoring Centre on Change (EMCC), director Raymond-Pierre Bodin said the main task of the centre would be to assist key actors in the public and private sectors at regional, sectoral and European levels as well as national and European bodies in their understanding, anticipation and management of industrial change through the provision of reliable and objective information on change and restructuring at sectoral and enterprise level. 'Europe can shape the direction of industrial change and the choices that are made may determine whether the consequences of change are positive or negative. It is therefore critical that we improve the way in which industrial change is understood, anticipated and managed.'

According to the director, the centre will facilitate more open discussion about change by providing information and the exchange of know-how and practice on how to manage the process of change.

'This is not about forecasting the future but about better anticipation. Exchange of information and knowledge and practice can help all concerned move forward in a more positive way,' he said.



Director Raymond-Pierre Bodin, with deputy director, Eric Verborgh (left) and Chair of the Administrative Board, Marc Boisnel (right) at the 65th Administrative Board Meeting.

The 65th Meeting of the Administrative Board of the Foundation, held on 27 March, discussed and approved proposals for the composition of the steering committee of the Centre.

Representatives of the social partners (ETUC, UNICE, CEEP), the Commission, the Foundation's Administrative Board, the Committee of Experts and the director and deputy director of the Foundation will form the committee to provide guidance and directional control during the development phase of the centre and to ensure the project meets its goals and targets. The first meeting will take place at the Foundation in May.

EIRO Annual Review

Industrial relations in the European Union and Norway in 2000 were largely marked by pay moderation and a generally low level of industrial action, with continuing attention to employment and an increasing focus on equality and diversity issues, the information and consultation of employees and regulating new forms of work. Flexibility was the keyword in dealing with working time, but the reduction of working hours was prominent in France.

EIRO *Annual Review* of the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO) which provides a comparative overview

of developments in industrial relations across the EU Member States and Norway, followed by a summary of the main events and issues at the EU level and in each of the individual countries concerned is now available online. Key issues covered by collective bargaining - pay, working time, job security, training and skills development - as well as legislative developments, the organisation and role of the social partners, industrial action, National Action Plans on employment, equal opportunities and diversity issues, information and consultation of employees and new forms of work are covered.

Contact: www.eiro.eurofound.ie

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EIRO updates

An overview of the broad trends in pay, working time and gender developments in the EU and Norway over 1999 and 2000 are now available online on EIROOnline, the Foundation's industrial relations information resource. As well as highlighting the main trends, the updates link to comprehensive EIROline reports on many of the issues raised.

According to the update on pay, average collectively agreed pay increases ran at around 2.9% in 1999 and 3.0% in 2000, with major variations between countries. Although average increases are not falling, when prices and productivity are taken into account, it appears that pay moderation has continued and even deepened across Europe. The update also examines different aspects of wage policy in relation to EMU. Figures indicate that (as in 1998-9) real pay increases are lower in the euro countries than in the EU/EEA more widely and that they converge more. They also fell slightly more from 1999 to 2000. The role of collective bargaining on wage issues and the different outcomes on the national basis are also covered.

On working time, the update says the average collectively agreed weekly working time stood at 38.1 hours in 2000, down half an hour from 1999 but much of the reduction is due to the introduction of the 35-hour week in France. Agreed weekly hours are between 37 and 39 hours in 14 of the countries examined.

Although major cuts in the working week through collective bargaining would appear to have stalled for the present, they are

still on the agenda of many trade unions. At EU level, the update highlights recent EU directives on working time, and contains indepth online reports linked to the pay update for further information.

The updates also provide gender-differentiated statistics on a number of key issues of industrial relations and employment. In industrial relations, many issues are often treated in a gender-neutral way, with an overall picture presented without reference to how the positions of women and men might differ within this general situation. The fact that no gender-differentiated figures are produced by some countries on some issues is in itself an interesting finding of this update

On average across the EU and Norway: women's earnings are around 79% of men's and full-time male workers work longer weekly hours than their female equivalents. Women's employment rate is lower than men's, but their unemployment rate is higher; union density is higher among men than women, who make up a minority of union members. Women are much more likely than men to work part time while part-time hours are almost the same for men and women. Temporary and fixed-term work is shared more equally between women and men.

Social indicator

A group of European experts in social indicators met at the Foundation on 9 March to discuss the development of the Foundation's monitoring instrument on living conditions which will be developed under the four-year programme, 2001-2004.

The discussion focused on identifying existing information sources and gaps to help to identify what the Foundation's contribution and outputs in this area might be. The meeting is part of an ongoing process of repositioning the Foundation's research into living conditions.

Advisory committees

As a further measure to ensure the most effective implementation of the new four-year programme, a revised system of involvement of the Administrative Board and Committee of Experts as advisory committees will be implemented at the Foundation. The measure should increase the involvement of, and the communication with, representatives of the Board and the Committee of Experts in the development and monitoring of work.

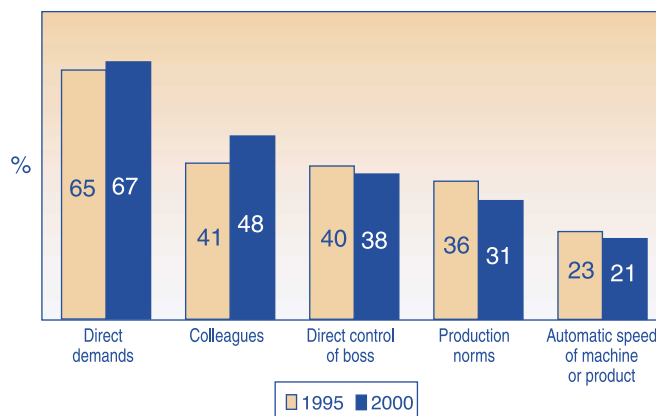
A committee will be established for each core area and transversal theme and other major developmental activity such as the European Monitoring Centre on Change. For the first time, communication and information issues will have an advisory committee. Members will be nominated by each of the groups (employers, workers and governments) and the European Commission and the Committee of Experts.

research in figures

Pace of work

Source: Third European Survey on Working Conditions

Employees' pace of work depends on ...



New look website

When the Foundation launched its website in 1998, it was seen as a useful information tool and another means of dissemination. In two years it has become a central platform in the Foundation's communication strategy to widen and deepen its relationship with its audiences across Europe.

Since 1998, the website has attracted a steadily growing audience with increasingly sophisticated information needs and demands. In 2000, almost 190,000 user sessions were recorded on the site and, perhaps more significantly, there were over 120,000 downloads of publications and information. In this context, the Foundation website has been redesigned to take account of changes in the Foundation's work structure in research and information activities. The new look website is available at the same address: www.eurofound.ie.

Meeting demand

'On average, we record over 20,000 user sessions per month and over 18,000 downloads of information. Previously, our information services would not have had the resources to deal with that amount of demand. The internet has made it possible to service these unprecedented levels of demand while also making it possible to deliver very tailored information to our audience,' says Fiona Murray, programme manager with responsibility for information systems and services.

'As the first port of call for a large proportion of our audience, it is essential that the website is both information rich and easy to use. These were the twin drivers in the new design of the website. Our design strategy was to keep the layout and navigation as simple as possible. The site is very much about information and content and the new design reflects this.'

Research framework

The four-year programme, *Analysing and anticipating change to support socio-economic progress 2001-2004*, has divided the Foundation's work into three core areas: living conditions, working conditions and industrial relations. The new website reflects the changed research framework.

Each core area is designated a subsite which includes: information on the overall research



objectives, a knowledge base of past research work and a 'work in progress' area which covers current research. The knowledge bases are a significant collation of information, grouped by theme which will be regularly updated.

'Our research findings have been brought to the front on the new site. We are very aware of the dynamic nature of the internet as a medium. In the 'work in progress' area, research projects will be followed through the different stages of their development. More information about the staff working in each area with direct mail links with the research teams are also included.

As findings or reports become available they will be posted online. For example, national reports will be published online before the consolidated report is published as these are clearly of considerable interest to our audiences at national level.

Other new features include a 'newsroom', a revamped publications site and more information about the institutional aspects of the Foundation.

'We have also included more comprehensive information about institutional aspects of the Foundation, reflecting the need to be transparent and accessible. Our code of practice on dealing with the public, an information guide, recruitment policies,

financial regulations and budgetary information are all online.

Press releases, a photo archive and links to our press officer are in a designated 'newsroom'. We view this a first stop for the media who may then make further contact for more information. A publications section highlights new publications which can be downloaded or ordered while some publications will only be available on the web. For example, over 100 case studies from *Quality in social public services*, a major Foundation project, will be available online. Our publications catalogue will also be available.

'We are acutely aware of the need to keep developing our website to meet user demands. We are now creating our web pages in-house which will give us enormous flexibility in terms of getting information online in the shortest timeframe and a much closer involvement of research teams with the website.'

events diary

14-15 May

Changing Patterns in Working Time, Vienna.
Presentation by Eberhard Köhler.

21 May

Partnership and Growth, Norrköping.
Presentation by Raymond-Pierre Bodin.

24-25 May

Managing Participation in the Firm, Bilbao.
Presentation by Kevin O'Kelly.



Publications mentioned

BEST 2/2000

Available in EN (to be published in DE and FR)

www.eurofound.ie

EIRO Annual Review 2000

Available in EN (Overview available soon in DE and FR)

www.eiro.eurofound.ie

EIRO annual updates

(on pay, working time and gender)

Available in EN (To be available also in DE and FR)

www.eiro.eurofound.ie

Employment in household services (report)

To be published shortly in DE, EN, FR, IT

New publications

Programme of work for 2001

Available in EN (to appear in all EU languages)

www.eurofound.ie

Design for sustainable development:

Success factors

Available in EN

€ 20

Cat. no. TJ-36-01-588-EN-C

Quality in social public services (report)

Available in EN (to be published in ES, DE, FR)

€ 20.50

Cat. no. TJ-36-01-378-EN-C

Quality in social public services

(summary)

Available in ES, EN, IT SV (to appear shortly in all languages)

www.eurofound.ie

Recent trends in employee financial participation in the EU (summary)

Available in EN (to appear in FR also)

www.eurofound.ie

• Free publications can be downloaded directly from the website and priced publications can be ordered online (www.eurofound.ie). They can also be ordered from your usual bookshop or from one of the sales agents of the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities (addresses available at www.eur-op.eu.int).

Open day

On the 16 May next, the Foundation will host an open day in Dublin to create more awareness of own activities and other European organisations based in Ireland. A broad cross-section of the general public have been invited to see first-hand the work of a European agency. Information stands will include the European Commission and Parliament representation in Ireland, government departments, the Economic and Social Committee, the Committee of the Regions and Irish social partner organisations. 🌐

24-hour society

Working time in the retail sector has undergone many changes over the last four years. The development of the '24-hour society' has led to a reconsideration of regulations governing the extension of shop opening hours in some Member States. The new edition of *Best, European studies on time*, published by the Foundation examines the expansion of working time flexibility in response to round-the-clock customer demand, highlighting the issues and offering practical information on the organisation of time. According to the study, 'Working time in the retail sector', employees in the retail sector are not usually afforded the sophisticated working time systems and autonomy that have evolved in the manufacturing sector. Overtime payments and advance notice of working hours are two examples of areas where employees might be open to exploitation. Pressures from e-commerce and the internet have continued to grow and the full impact of such pressures on the retail sector still remains to be seen. 🌐

Household jobs

With low or no pay, long hours and no career opportunities, household work has traditionally not been viewed as attractive employment. However, that is now changing with its recognition as an important growth sector for employment.

A new report, *Employment in household services*, published by the Foundation, proposes a range of measures to improve the quality of jobs including better working conditions, work organisation and training. Research was carried out in eight Member States (Austria, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Portugal and the UK) documenting the nature and extent of the work, the quality of jobs and job satisfaction in the care of children and the elderly, cleaning, home maintenance and catering. 🌐

ESC visit

Members of the Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, from the Economic and Social Committee (ESC) will visit the Foundation on 3 May. The main issues to be discussed include social public services, social inclusion, gender equality, quality of employment, corporate social responsibility and the European Monitoring Centre on Change. ESC is the consultative body for the European institutions made up of representatives of the economic and social interest groups of the European Union. The main tasks of the ESC are to advise the European Commission, European Parliament and the Council on civil society issues, to promote a greater commitment of civil society to European development, and to foster the role of civil society organisations and associations in non EU-countries. 🌐

communiqué

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