

AMICUS DISAPPOINTED AT THE GOVERNMENT'S DRAFT LEGISLATION FOR INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION

In July the UK government issued its long-awaited draft regulations on the informing and consulting of employees within the UK. The new regulations are as a result of the European Directive 2002/14/EC, which requires the government to introduce and implement legislation that establishes a general framework setting out the minimum requirements for the right to information and consultation of employees.

Whilst the main provisions contained within the government's proposed regulations are determined by the directive, all member states are entitled, when transposing the directive into national legislation, to provide better and more advantageous rights and benefits for workers than provided for in the Commissions Directive.

It is quite clear from the proposed government regulations that they have decided to take a more 'cautious' approach and have clearly avoided any unnecessary enhancements to the directive's provisions, on the basis that it is not the intention to impose additional regulation on companies, which may have the effect of increasing cost compliance.

Derek Simpson, General Secretary, said: 'We are aware of the need for labour flexibility, but also job security. Information and consultation rights could establish a more fruitful, enlightened and prosperous industrial relations environment; however, if the UK government insists on weakening the purpose and objective of the directive, not only will they be paying 'lip service' to EU legislation and the European Commission; not only will they allow employers to 'fudge' their responsibilities; they will more importantly be denying UK workers the opportunity to experience similar employment rights that workers throughout the rest of the European Union currently enjoy.'

More worryingly for trade unions – and a good indication of the government's approach to the implementation of the directive – is the response of the CBI to the draft regulations. The CBI has consistently opposed and



FAIR PLAY? The proposed £75K maximum fine on companies for inadequate consultation is the same as they happily pay for a Premier league corporate box

PHOTO: Geoff Crawford (reportdigital.com)

criticised any forms of information and consultation, yet their Director-General Digby Jones welcomed the proposals by the government and stated that: 'The government has made sense of a poor piece of EU legislation.' The CBI was particularly pleased with the fact that the legislation is flexible enough to protect the 'apparently' good practice that already exists in the UK, with regards to information and consultation.

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NO LINK BETWEEN EMPLOYMENT REGULATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT OR POOR PRODUCTIVITY

It is often an argument used by UK employers and the UK government that increased employment legislation will lead to job losses and reductions in productivity. The recently issued proposed draft regulations on information and consultation certainly suggest that they still believe this

theory. However, recent research shows that there is no systematic link between employment regulation and either job generation or unemployment or reductions in workplace productivity.

For years UK employers have made *ad hoc* comparisons with the 'deregulated

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by Ian Methven
Amicus-AEEU
European Officer

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DEREK SIMPSON:
Amicus-AEEU
General Secretary

‘Information and consultation rights could establish a more fruitful, enlightened and prosperous industrial relations environment’

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Amicus disappointed at the governments draft legislation...

It seems that many Amicus members would tend to disagree with the CBI's analysis of current 'good practice'. Nearly 200 Shop Stewards who recently attended Amicus information and consultation courses (see page 4), reported that they currently have limited access to information, which was at the discretion of the employer, and were rarely consulted. Even consultation over redundancies, for our shop stewards or convenors, is in many respects a 'damage limitation' exercise, whereby consultation surrounds 'who' is to be made redundant rather than 'how many' and 'why'.

Employers were also pleased with the UK government's approach to the signing of voluntary agreements and the introduction of 'double trigger' mechanisms for starting negotiations on information and consultation arrangements: 10 per cent of the workforce to request information and consultation provisions and the right for the employer to call a ballot to endorse the request if an agreement is already in place.

Amicus on the other hand is disappointed at the lack of proposed trade union involvement when setting up

information and consultation provisions and are also disappointed and disgusted at the maximum penalty for breach of the regulations, which is set at just £75,000. We will continue to lobby for no maximum penalty, especially since the directive states:

'...member states shall provide for adequate sanctions to be applicable in the event of infringement of this directive by the employer or the employees' representatives. These sanctions must be effective, proportionate and dissuasive.'

It is our belief that considering the sum of £75,000 is equivalent to what some employers pay for a 'corporate box' at a premier league stadium, it is hard to believe that the proposed sanctions for non-compliance are truly 'effective', 'proportionate' and 'dissuasive'.

There are a number of other issues that Amicus is concerned about and we will submit a detailed paper highlighting our reservations to the DTI. In the meantime if you would like to analyse the proposed draft regulation, log on to to: http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/consultation/i_c_consdoc.pdf

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No link between employment regulation and unemployment or poor productivity

labour market' of the UK and the US and the 'regulated labour market' of the Eurozone economies, claiming that 'redtape' is strangling the creation of new jobs. However, a review of the facts indicates that this argument is highly misleading.

Between 1961 and 1990 the rate of job creation in the UK and the Eurozone economies was roughly the same, but in the 1990s the rate of job creation in the UK fell behind the Eurozone average. Furthermore, the poor UK performance in the 1990s was entirely because of the huge job losses in the first half of the decade.

It has also been suggested that job creation rates in the US have been consistently higher than in the UK and the Eurozone, however in the second half of the 1990s job creation speeded up in the Eurozone and slowed down

in the US: latest forecasts show stronger job growth in the Eurozone over the period 2001 to 2004 than in the 'de-regulated' US.

Finally, we saw no improvement in our relative unemployment performance during the years of de-regulation, privatisation, and declining collective bargaining between 1980 and 1995. In the 1960s and 1970s UK unemployment was lower than in the economies that went on to form the current Eurozone, but between 1980 and 1995 the average annual unemployment rate was higher in the UK than in the Eurozone; only in the second half of the 1990s has the gap closed significantly between the UK and the average Eurozone unemployment rates, a period when labour market regulations thanks to the European Union were increasing. It has also been the 'Euroscopic'

theory that regulation is blamed not only for high unemployment but also the alleged failure of Europe to benefit from the US-model 'new economy'. However, recent surveys show that Germany and France had not only eliminated the substantial US historic lead in workplace productivity (GDP per hour) but also in the 1990s pulled ahead, indicating that the US is no longer the productivity leader as previously commonly assumed.

Furthermore, it is not only Germany and France who have diminished the productivity lead the US once had. Between 1992 and 2002 the US lost ground against most European economies in terms of GDP per hour – the best measure of workplace productivity. By 2002 eight of the 15 EU economies – Luxembourg, Belgium, Italy, Netherlands, France, Ireland, Denmark and Germany – had higher workplace productivity than the US.

So the next time an employer claims that an increase in employment legislation will lead to massive redundancies or will reduce productivity in the UK – put them straight.

FAILURE TO CONSULT STAFF REDUCES PRODUCTIVITY AND PERFORMANCE

A recent survey issued by the TUC contradicts employers' claims that information and consultation will lead to an overburdened labour market and a reduction in productivity. The results actually draw the opposite conclusions, claiming that 'the failure to inform and consult with employees' will be the reason for reductions in productivity.

The survey points out that the UK's low productivity economy is threatening the success of the government's programme. Performance has not improved because incompetent managers have failed to encourage employee involvement, which is directly related to high levels of productivity, empowerment and the adoption of the necessary working practices associated with 'high performance workplaces'.

High performance workplaces are linked to high trust relationships, which require employee involvement and participation in company decisions, which directly impact on employees' working environment and practices. Where employees are entitled to make decisions about their work and are able to feed back their thoughts and concerns to the management, there is a

correlation with increases of productivity. Furthermore, it creates a more enlightened atmosphere of industrial relations and frees up managers to concentrate on 'leadership' rather than 'control and command' roles.

The research indicates that companies are more likely to introduce high performance working practices if they are willing to inform and consult with employees through independent trade unions or works councils, rather than if they attempt to undermine current industrial relations practices and directly communicate with individual staff.

The report states that the biggest barrier against improved productivity and the creation of high performance workplaces is the incompetence and attitude of UK managers. Much hope is pinned on the introduction of the information and consultation directive to address these many problems. The TUC is requesting the government to promote to business the clear link between employee involvement and high performance workplace practices.

Key findings:

- **THERE IS NO RELATIONSHIP** between regulation and productivity – the UK has the lowest level of regulation among its competitors and low productivity.
- **EMPLOYEE INVOLVEMENT AND TRUST** boosts the profitability and productivity improvements associated with high performance working practices.
- **TRUE CONSULTATION** tends to only take place where companies recognise trade unions.
- **CONSULTING STAFF** without directly involving unions leads to less employee involvement. Evidence from across the developed world suggests that employee participation has a bigger impact on business outcomes in unionised companies.
- **MORE DECISION MAKING** by frontline workers increases the pace of innovation, raises morale and increases the likelihood of support for workplace change.
- **UK FIRMS HAVE FAILED** to adopt high performance reforms common amongst their competitors. Productivity in foreign-owned manufacturing firms in the UK is far higher than in British owned firms.
- **UK MANAGERS ARE A BARRIER** to high performance because they are low-skilled, use outdated strategies and cannot trust workers with decisions, as they do not respect the people they manage. Most managers claim to consult staff but most employees do not feel consulted.

JUST LOOK AT THE GERMANS

Employers always argue that further employment regulation will lead to high unemployment and burden the economy 'just like Germany'. However, if critics examine how the German economy has fared over the past few years, although they would conclude that it has lost ground on the rest of the EU, including the UK and also against the US they would discover that the main catalyst for the slowdown in the German economy has not been extensive labour market regulations, which to be fair is not greatly different from the rest of continental Europe, but the aftershock of reunification.

High unemployment in Germany today is concentrated in the former Eastern side of the country, where the rates range between 13 and 17 per cent. In the former West Germany, unemployment is similar to the UK. In addition, unlike the UK, the German labour market structures have not only created one of the strongest vocational training systems in the industrialised world, which is why German productivity is better than the UK; but that 'youth unemployment' in Germany is well below that experienced in the UK and the US. The most recent figures show that unemployment among the under 25s in Germany was 9.4 per cent, compared to 12.1 per cent in the UK and 11.9 per cent in the US.

If we put into perspective what Germany has achieved, which is to absorb virtually overnight a bankrupt economy with a number of social and political tensions, we should in fact be congratulating them on how well they have coped, rather than how badly they have done.

■ Information supplied by TUC – 'unravelling the red tape myths'

PHOTO: PA Photos.com



AMICUS INFORMATION AND CONSULTATION SEMINARS TRAINING COURSES ARE A REAL SUCCESS



MIKE SMALLWOOD
National Officer

'The recent European Consultation Directives courses for shop stewards... have proved both informative and timely'



TONY MURPHY
National Officer

'Agreements could be watered down and would be legally binding'

'The Information and Consultation Directive will have a massive impact on UK industrial relations', that is the reaction of Amicus shop steward Danny Halligan after attending the recent information and consultation seminar at Esher place. The seminars, which have been organised and run by the European department, are aimed at educating Amicus shop stewards and convenors about the new European Directive that will become legislation in the UK in 2005 (see front page). The seminars have been funded by European Commission and have enabled just under 200 shop stewards to get an insight on how the new directive will impact on their roles as lay officials.

The seminars are split into three sections, first an overview of the Directive, second an analysis on how other European countries operate information and consultation provisions, and third trying to develop best practice among Amicus members. Much of the seminar involves group work allowing participants to relay their own experiences and opinions. In addition, a lecturer from Keele University and a guest from Sweden give participants an overview of other European information systems. This session soon makes the participants

realise how far behind the UK is compared to other European Countries. Ray Jones, Amicus shop steward said: 'It soon became apparent that the UK law, as it stands today, leaves a lot to be desired. Some of our more enlightened European countries work on a fairer system when it comes to informing their workforce of possible changes that will affect their employment.'

One of the key themes of the seminar is to make the stewards aware of a clause in the Directive, which allows companies to set up voluntary agreements before it becomes UK law. The clause allows agreements to be negotiated between employers and employees, which do not have to comply with the main provisions of the Directive. This gives the employer the opportunity to set up information and consultation provisions, with unsuspecting employees, which are weak and ineffective.

Amicus acknowledges and is fully aware of the implications the 'voluntary route' will cause for its members. Tony Murphy, National Officer, said: 'The course made me clearly aware on how important it is to make our shop stewards know that

employers can approach them now and request they negotiate voluntary agreements, which could be legally binding. It is important and imperative that our shop stewards are also aware that they are under no obligation to sign voluntary agreements, and that they should contact either their Regional or National Officials before they enter into any form of negotiations.'

After attending the seminar, Allan Bromwich, Amicus shop steward, was well aware of the full implications of the Directive, especially the clause that allows for voluntary agreements: 'It became apparent to all of us very early on, that UK employees have a very useful "tool" in the form of this Directive. However – UK Trade Unions will have to seize the initiative, because the employers will have the ability to water down the effectiveness of the Directive.'

John Wall, National Officer for Aerospace, said: 'Whilst I was more than pleased with the content of the seminar I was absolutely delighted at the positive reaction from my shop stewards. Indeed my only regret was that I did not have every senior steward from the myriad of aerospace companies in the UK. There is an old saying "knowledge is like the sun, it lights up the darkness". Without knowledge of and involvement in the business and strategies of employers, workers will never be more than wage slaves. The end result of the seminar was the realisation of our senior workplace representatives that with this new legislation and the skill and determination to use it, this need no longer be the case. One of the most worthwhile courses I have been on and a theme I have been banging on about with employers for years.

'The aerospace industry is the most highly globalised of all and the UK sector is the keenest exponent of globalisation. We must be in the vanguard of exploiting the new legislation.'



Alan Harvey, National Officer (back row 3rd from left) attends an Information and Consultation course with Claire Brennan, research officer (back row far left)

SULTATION UCCESS

Mike Smallwood, National Officer, was also pleased with the overall outcomes of the course. He said: 'The recent European Consultation Directives courses for shop stewards within the Technical Servicing, Broadcasting and Retail sector have proved both informative and timely within a sector where the European and global aspects are becoming more applicable.

'As companies vie for market share in a very competitive environment the need to fully consult on a wider basis is becoming more appropriate by the day. Information on all aspects of a company is now no longer just an option – it is vital to enable our workplace representatives to fully understand and indeed challenge the decisions that are sometimes taken from outside the UK.

'The training of both our lay activists and FTOs on any new European Directives that have a direct effect on our members working lives in advance of their introduction is crucial in enabling Amicus to fully participate from day one. Indeed the feedback from the shop stewards has indicated that they will now be able to influence and assist UK management in drawing up processes and procedures on the new consultation directives, something that without the recent seminars would not really have been possible.'

Jonathan Hayward, Amicus European Policy Officer who, along with Ian Methven, Head of the European Department tutored the courses, said: 'Amicus is leading the way on the Information and Consultation Directive, we have been able to secure money from the Commission well before any other union, which has enabled us to ensure that our stewards are well up to speed on the Directive. We have had a good response and hopefully participants will leave the course well informed about the Directive and are fully prepared for when their employers approach them about setting up information and consultation bodies.'



Tony Murphy, National Officer, (back row middle) attends the motor components information and consultation seminar which was also attended by Alison James, Amicus research officer.

A 'COURSE' FOR ACTION!

A special report on the 'information and consultation course' by Amicus Shop Steward Allan Bromwich



On the 16 July, I joined 16 other Amicus shop stewards at the Union's training college at Esher Place in Surrey, to take part in an 'Information & Consultation' course. Many of us had little knowledge of what was in prospect – however, the initial invitation letter had clearly whetted our appetites, and it was good to see such a high level of interest in the subject.

The stated aim of the three day, residential course, is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the European Union's (EU) 'Information and Consultation Directive', that is to be phased into UK law over a three year period, starting on 23 March 2005.

The purpose of the Directive sets out the minimum requirements for the right to information and consultation of employees in undertakings or establishments within the EU.

The stated objectives of the course were to understand the change in UK industrial relations; to understand European information and consultation systems; to develop best practice; and to understand the implementation process.

We soon got into the thick of it, and it became apparent to all of us very early on, that UK employees have a very useful 'tool' in the form of this Directive, coming our way. However – and it seems there is always a 'but' with these things – it was emphasised that the UK trade unions will have to seize the initiative, to get the best out of the Directive for their members. The reason for this is that employers will have the ability to 'water

down' the effectiveness of the Directive, if we are not alert. How to make best use of the Directive, from our Union's perspective, is very carefully and comprehensively detailed during the course.

To give some perspective to the potential in the Directive, we were enlightened on the information and consultation processes that trade unions and employers operate in Germany and Sweden, and how these compare with the UK trade unions' experience of industrial relations.

We also took part in group sessions, which were aimed at consolidating our understanding of the Directive, and how to go about formulating an agreement with employers, drawing on the 'Practical arrangements for information and consultation', that it provides.

We all reached the end of the last session on the final day, much better informed about the Directive, and well equipped to go back to our places of work to seek an agreement with our employers on the Directive, thanks to the very effective tutors who trained us on the course.

Without question, all Amicus shop stewards should take the interest to attend this course, so that our Union's positive influence is brought to bear on the agreements that will inevitably be formed with employers on the back of this Directive. To realise that objective, we cannot let the grass grow under our feet, but get on with the job NOW!

WHAT'S GOING ON WITHIN EUROPE

Claude Moraes, Labour MEP for London and Labour's spokesperson on Employment gives an update on key issues which will be of interest to Amicus members during the current Italian Presidency of the European Union.



CLAUDE MORAES, MEP
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The Italian Presidency of the EU lasts between June and December and a range of issues of importance to trade unionists will be on the agenda, including progress on new rights for temporary workers, pensions, corporate social responsibility and progress on the so called 'Lisbon Agenda' to promote more high quality jobs particularly in the manufacturing industry.

The Italians will inherit the draft Directive on Temporary/Agency Workers during their presidency. This directive is becoming an increasingly important one for Amicus members because there has been an increased use of agency work in the manufacturing sector. The Directive, which seeks to improve pay and conditions for workers who sign up with agencies, has been delayed over the issues of when rights would kick in, comparability with permanent workers in similar work and transition periods for countries like the UK and

Ireland who do not currently have such rights for workers but have rapidly growing agency sectors.

The Italian presidency will push the EU further into the argument that the EU should have some competence in this area, but reactions from other member states have been negative. However they will promote an in-depth examination of the effect of the ageing population on public finances and pensions.

On Corporate Social Responsibility, the Italian presidency is moving away from the trade union view that CSR should include a mix of voluntary measures and regulation. The Presidency favours the voluntary approach in the way multi-nationals police working conditions and standards in their operations within the EU and in their operations in developing countries.

There is concern amongst Labour and

PES MEPs that the Lisbon Agenda is not stalled during the current EU Presidency. For example, will the EU develop a framework to protect atypical workers (e.g. part-time workers), and will there be a development of specific targets for the Lisbon goals across EU countries.

Finally, there will be critical discussions up to Christmas on how trade union rights, and employment policy in general, will be decided in the future under the new EU constitution. The current debate over whether Qualified Majority Voting (QMV) should be extended to these areas, and about the impact of the EU's enlargement to 25 member states on industry in the UK will pick up pace in the next few months.

Media Myths

You may recall that in our December 2002 edition of the *Euro Bulletin*, we reported on how the UK press mislead the British public, with regards to information about Europe. We stated that many of the stories written in the British media about Europe were complete fiction and were aimed at discrediting many of the European institutions. Well 'just when you thought it couldn't get any worse' the UK press is up to its old tricks again, blaming 'barmy European bureaucrats' for introducing 'bizarre decisions' at a EU level.

The attitude of the British press has so annoyed the European Commission that they have compiled a dossier, which lists the shameful lies reported in the UK media and have stated that they will set the record straight, with regards to every misrepresented story which appears in the newspapers. The Commission decided to act after the *The Times* newspaper and subsequently many other newspapers, reported that farmers could face up to three months in prison, if they refused to put toys in their pig sties. *The Times* stated that the 'bizarre' EU ruling was put in place 'to keep pigs happy and prevent them chewing each other'. The commission responded, by saying that was completely untrue and points out that in fact there are two EU Directives on animal welfare requiring that 'pigs have permanent access to materials which enable proper...manipulation activities'. This refers to stimulants such as straw, hay, wood, sawdust and mushroom compost; there was no mention of toys.

Euro Myths

Although the number of misrepresented stories about Europe has declined since their heyday in the 1980s there is definitely a current trend aimed at discrediting the European Union. Here are some other 'bizarre' and 'untrue' stories which have appeared in our newspapers:

Myth

Dana, the Irish pop singer turned MEP, was last week startled to discover the EC has diverted £33m earmarked for the restructuring of the EU fishing industry to Marie Stopes, an organisation dedicated to promoting abortion and contraception.

(Sunday Telegraph, Jan 2003)

Truth

The unspent money, for the EU fisheries agreements with developing countries, was relocated to a global fund to fight Aids. Not a penny went to Marie Stopes.

Myth

A village had to get rid of its swings because Euro-rules said they were too tall.

(The Sun, Jan 2003)

Truth

The European standardisation committee – nothing to do with the EU – advised a height limit on swings, which means playgrounds with higher swings 'might' have a problem securing insurance. No one has been ordered to pull the swings down.

Myth

Secondhand toys? Sorry we can't take them, says NSPCC.

(The Daily Mail, Jan 2003)

Truth

In the interests of child safety, EU law requires that all new toys must bear the CE kite mark. However, secondhand toys sold for charity are specifically excluded – the NSPCC's decision to stop selling them bore no relation to a 'barmy' EU rule quoted in the report.

ENLARGEMENT OF EWCs

The treaty on EU enlargement was signed on 16 April in Athens. ten countries will officially join the EU from 1 May 2004. Between now and that date, the new Member States will need to transpose all European legislation into national law, in particular Directive 94/45/EEC on European works councils.

The EWC Directive will have to be applied as soon as they join the EU. This means there will be no transition period and therefore no 'Article 13' agreements.

As a result, the Directive will also immediately apply to up-and-running European works councils, which will have to provide for their enlargement to include the ten new Member States. They will have the same rights to information and consultation as their colleagues in the present EU.

Enlargement now raises the question for EWCs of how to integrate the new Member States into their activities where this has not already been done. Long before any enlargement was planned, trade unions have pursued a policy seeking the widest possible integration of countries from Central and Eastern Europe into EWCs. This policy has

already enabled employees from countries joining the EU to be incorporated into EWCs, long before their integration into the EU had been envisaged. However, many multinationals are present in the accession countries, and many EWCs still need representatives from these countries.

Some agreements have already anticipated the situation by including a provision explaining the procedure to be followed in the event of EU enlargement. Other agreements only stipulate the possibility of the group being extended to new countries, while others yet contain no clause on the group's changing scope or number of countries concerned. These widely varying situations will necessitate very different approaches.

Moreover, while some representatives of accession countries are full members, on the same basis as their current EU colleagues, others by contrast have observer status or host status, limiting their rights within the EWC. It will therefore be important to ensure that the existing EWC agreement is revised so as to guarantee that these representatives

have the same rights as full members.

Enlargement has extensive implications and constitutes a real challenge for EWCs.

The European Commission has indicated that there will be no opt-out option for any new members, so the directive will apply in full from 1 May 2004. Eight of the ten accession countries have already transposed the legislation on EWCs into national law. Only Estonia and Lithuania have still to adopt the bill they have drafted on this subject.

The Commission plans to publish the various transposed national laws on its website, http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/socdial/labour/directive9445/index_en.htm

Note: Information provided by the European Metalworkers Federation

EWC revision

The DTI has put out a consultation document on the revision of the European Works Council directive. Amicus will be responding to this revision before 7 October. The consultation document can be accessed on www.dti.gov.uk.



IAN METHVEN:
Amicus-AEEU
European Officer

UK SOCIAL PARTNERS AGREE ON GUIDELINES FOR TELEWORK

In August, UK social partners reached an agreement on guidelines for telework. The guidelines are as a result of the European framework agreement on telework, which was established in July by the EU level social partners.

The European framework agreement on telework is unique. It is the first time that EU-level social partners have agreed that an EU agreement should not be legally binding, but should be implemented into national industrial relations systems 'in accordance with procedures and practices specific to management and labour in the Members State'. In laymen's terms this means that UK social partners (TUC, CBI and CEEP UK) were under

obligation to negotiate guidelines, which could be implemented into UK industrial relations, but which would not be legally binding on British business.

The joint text agreed by the UK social partners is very much in line with the provisions of the EU-level agreement covering areas such as voluntary character of telework, employment conditions, health and safety and the organisation of work. One of the key problems with the guidelines is how they are implemented into the UK labour market. Unlike the majority of Europe, collective bargaining in the UK is not conducted at national or sector level and instead is very fragmented. It is for this reason why the telework

guidelines cannot be introduced in collective agreements, which cover large sections of the workforce. The guidelines can however be used by management and local trade union reps to draw up company specific policies on teleworking.

The government and the three signatory organisations are expected to stage a public launch of the guidelines this autumn. The TUC stated that it is 'committed to making the agreement work in practice and we will be promoting it to all our affiliated unions and including it on our website'. For further information on the guidelines please log on to: <http://www.dti.gov.uk/er/individual/telework.pdf>

What is telework?

Telework is a form of organising and/or performing work, using information technology, in the context of an employment contract/-relationship, where work, which could also be performed at the employer's premises, is carried out away from those premises on a regular basis.

There is no definition of telework in UK law. Telework is not a job but a method of working. The essential feature is the use of information technologies to enable remote working from the office, either for:

- Workers who work at home full time or part time
- Workers who divide their time between home and the office and
- Primarily mobile workers using their home as an administrative base.



Reviewed by Jonathan Hayward,
Amicus European
Policy Officer

Baxi Group Ltd sign EWC agreement

THE EMPLOYEES OF BAXI GROUP LIMITED, which includes many Amicus members, recently signed a new EWC agreement with the management. Baxi is one of Europe's leading heating and home comfort companies and employs over 5,500 people throughout the UK, Italy, France, Germany and Denmark. Jonathan Hayward, European Policy Officer, who assisted the employees when negotiating the agreement, said: 'It is a good agreement, which will allow the employees to be informed and consulted over a number of issues.'

The Group was formed in November 2000 by the merger of Newmond PLC and Baxi Holdings plc. Baxi Holdings plc was a wholly owned subsidiary of The Baxi Partnership Ltd, an employee trust company which had acquired the heating division of Blue Circle Industries PLC in December 1999.



Baxi group EWC attended by Amicus rep Dave Cheatham of Baxi Potterton

IG Metall elect a new boss

The German metalworkers' union IG Metall recently elected a new president, Jurgen Peters, at the first session of its 2003 Congress, on the 31 August in Frankfurt. Peters who was previously the union's vice president, received two-thirds of the votes cast, with 66.1 per cent. At the age of 59, he is expected to serve one term as president, until the union's next Congress in 2007.

Peters replaces previous president Klaus Zwickel, after Zwickel was blamed for the union's failed 35-hour week campaign in the east of the country. This was the first time since 1954 that an IG Metall claim backed by strike action had failed.

Find out more about our new 'neighbours'

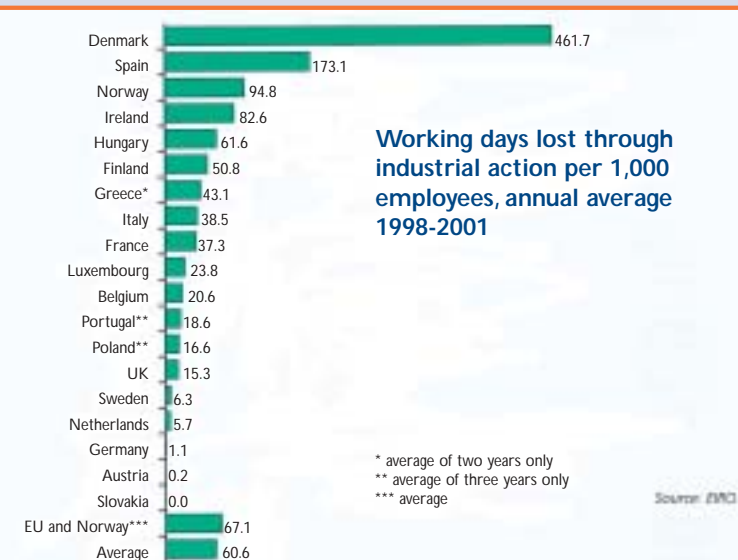
Written by the Local Governmental International Bureau, this booklet sets out the basic facts and figures of EU enlargement, explains its background and the mechanics of the process, details the applicant countries' local and regional government systems and provides examples of local co-operation. For further information log onto www.lgib.gov.uk/enlargement To receive a copy, e-mail: enquires@lgib.gov.uk

EU bulletin

You can now keep up-to-date with the latest developments within the EU, thanks to a monthly bulletin, which gives an insight into activities of the European Commission and other Community institutions. If you would like to add your name to the mailing list please do so by logging onto: <http://europa.eu.int/abc/doc/off/bull/en/welcome.htm>

International union of food launches new Coca-Cola workers' bulletin

THIS BULLETIN IS THE FIRST in a series of bulletins from the IUF devoted exclusively to the Coca-Cola Company. It is part of a recently launched global IUF Coca-Cola project, which was initiated at a global meeting of Coca-Cola union in New York in March. The network of Coca-Cola workers' unions affiliated to the IUF will initially be kept updated through this bulletin which we hope will find a wide circulation amongst affiliates and their rank and file membership in the Coca-Cola system. Affiliates can forward information or stories for the bulletin to: paul.graver@iuf.org



Italian food sector workers get pay rise

Unions and employers have concluded a collective agreement for employees in the food sector. The pay deal provides for an increase of 96 euro (£68) a month introduced in three stages over two years.

The agreement, which covers 300,000 workers, was reached in mid-July by employers and unions in the sector after some weeks of negotiations. At one stage it looked as though no agreement would be reached as unions left the negotiating table in disgust.

Austria moving towards the 24/7 culture

At the beginning of July the Austria parliament passed an amendment to the legislation relating to shop opening times. Under current regulations, shops are permitted to remain open on weekdays until 19.30 and on Saturdays until 17.00.

These regulations apply to the whole country, apart from certain tourist areas, which have extended opening hours. The new regulations will allow shops to stay open until 21.00 on weekdays and 18.00 on Saturdays.

New Belgium government promises 200,000 jobs!

Following elections in May, the new Belgian government, under the leadership of Guy Verhofstadt, has promised to create 200,000 new jobs over the next four years. The government, which is a continuation of the previous coalition between liberals and socialists, plans to reduce income tax by 800 million euro, but rather than general tax reductions, it will target certain groups.

See? We're not that bad

A recent report published by the EIRO, suggests that the UK is not as bad as some would have us believe when it comes to industrial action. The report stated that the UK came 11th out of the current 15 EU member states, with regards to working days lost because of industrial action. Furthermore, although the British media may have us believe that the Germans and French are always on strike, this report would suggest different.

The report identifies three sectors most affected by industrial action over the period 1998-2002 across Europe. These were transport and communications, industry/manufacturing and public sector.