

ETUC summer school tackles transnational bargaining, working time, precarious jobs and "flexicurity"

Over 50 trade union officers from around Europe gathered in Seville last weekend to debate some of the key issues facing European trade unions. The ETUC's annual summer school on collective bargaining brought together representatives from confederations from 20 countries along with officers from nine European Industry Federations and advisers from the ETUC and the ETUI-REHS research and education organisation.

The ETUI-REHS provided the school with an overview of the latest collective bargaining developments around Europe, noting in particular trends towards higher pay deals in countries like Germany, France and Italy, after a period of wage moderation.

There was also a review of working time developments with concern expressed about the latest indications of increased weekly working hours for full-time workers in some countries following many years of a decline in hours.

This provided participants also with a brief opportunity to get an update on possible revisions to the Working Time Directive. The revisions were stalled mainly over the question of the individual opt-out and support, within the Council of Ministers, from 13 countries for the UK's insistence that the opt-out be maintained. The ETUC alerted affiliates to the need to gear up their lobbying on this issue with rumours that the current Finnish presidency would try to move things forward.

The summer school was also another step forward in considering the European Commission's proposal for an optional legal framework for transnational agreements. The Commission argues that there is now a growing body of agreements signed at multinational company level that exist in a legal limbo. If employers decide not to abide by these agreements then there is no clear legal process to deal with this and so a legal framework is necessary.

The main focus of the discussion this time was the way that the EMF metalworkers' federation had tackled the issue. After considerable internal debate the federation agreed in June this year on an internal procedure to get a mandate to negotiate with multinational employers. This is about to be put into practice with negotiations on equal opportunities with a specific employer.

Further background information on the legal framework and the discussions so far can be found at www.epsu.org/a/2330.

“Flexicurity” is the current buzz European word and topic of a report that the European Commission is committed to submit to the Council of Ministers next year. An introduction from the ETUI-REHS made clear that “flexicurity” could be all things to all people with trade unions keen to underline security of employment while employers talk more about the need for greater flexibility. The ETUC would be developing its position on this to ensure that there was a clear trade union perspective taken into account in the Commission's report.

In a related debate summer school participants looked at the issue of precarious employment with the help of a presentation from the French trade union research organisation IRES. This put the spotlight on four key elements that could help define the extent to which a job could be seen as precarious - the degree of security, the extent of control, the level of support in terms of legal protection and collective agreements and the level of income.

- [Log in](#) to post comments
- [Printer-friendly version](#)

Policies

[Collective Bargaining](#)