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ETUCE to hold meeting with European Commission President Romano Prodi to discuss public services

ETUCE will jointly with the ETUC Service Federations meet with Mr. Romano Prodi to discuss the future of public services in the EU.

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ETUCE calls on members of the European Parliament to vote in favour of the phasing-out of individual opt outs of working time regulations

ETUCE sent an urgent appeal to several members of the European Parliament (EP) prior to the vote on 11 February 2004.

[>>> Read more](#)

ETUCE CONDEMS:

Brussels, 11 March 2004

Bomb attack in Madrid

Dear Colleagues,
I learnt this morning about the terrible bomb attack in Madrid. ETUCE wants to express its deepest contempt for this kind of violence and terror. No political cause can justify this horrendous killing of innocent workers and citizens. Our thoughts will be with the families of the victims of this cruel crime and we will urge all teachers to fight for democracy and against the use of violence.

Martin Rømer
General Secretary

Calendar

26 April

EI/ETUCE
Bureau
meeting

26-27 April

EI Pan-
European
Committee /
ETUCE
Executive
Board meeting

14-15 June

ETUCE
Council
meeting

15-16 June

ETUCE
Networks

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NEW ETUCE PROJECT: “Developing non-discriminatory quality education for Roma children”

In Europe, more than seven million Roma find themselves in a very difficult situation. Moreover, in recent decades, the issue of Romani children’s education has been neglected by most Governments.

In the ETUCE Executive Board meeting held in Brussels on 22 and 23 September 2003, the Dutch member union AOb drew our attention to the lack of education of Romani children in Central and Eastern Europe.

ETUCE decided to react to this discriminatory situation and submitted a proposal for a project to the European Commission. The project is designed together with our Bulgarian member unions (SEB and PODKREPA) and AOb, and was recommended by the Bulgarian Ministry of Education.

“Developing non-discriminatory quality education for Roma children” will seek to advocate in favour of Romani children’s integration in primary and secondary education, mainly in three Eastern and Central European countries: Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia.

At this stage, the Commission has approved the preparatory phase of the project that we will carry out from 1 March until 31 August. In this phase a full proposal will be prepared and submitted to the European Commission to be granted for a longer period (two years).

The preparatory phase will focus in principle on the situation of Romani children in Bulgaria. The trade unions participating in this phase are SEB, PODKREPA, AOb and ETUCE. During the six month period, the situation of the Romani children in Bulgaria will be analysed in seminars with teachers of Romani origin and of Bulgarian majority origin, and respectively Romani and Bulgarian majority parents’ associations. Meetings will be held with local and national authorities.

A Conference to discuss our conclusions on the situation of Romani children’s education in Bulgaria will be held in Sofia by the beginning of June with participants from Bulgaria, Hungary and Slovakia. The Conference will have as a main aim the creation of a Steering Committee containing teachers, parents and trade union officials from the three countries, as well as ETUCE and AOb representatives. The Steering Committee will be responsible for setting up the full two-year proposal.

By means of this project, ETUCE hopes to be able to contribute to enhancing the quality education of these children in Eastern and Central European countries, and therefore to improve the respect for minorities and democracy in our European society. It is one of the goals of the ETUCE Action Programme to work for equal opportunities in education.

ETUCE to hold meeting with European Commission President Romano Prodi to discuss public services

ETUCE will, jointly with the ETUC Service Federations (EPSU¹, UNI-Europa² and ETF³), meet with Mr. Romano Prodi to discuss the future of public services in the EU.

The meeting is held in the light of recent developments which testify to the Commission's uncertain stand on matters relating to public services. In May 2003, the Commission published a Green Paper to launch a broad debate on Services of General Interest (SGI) in the EU. While the follow-up to the consultative process on the Green Paper has not yet been completed, the Commission has taken steps to present proposals for legislation in fields closely related to SGI. Hence the Trade Union leaders have requested a meeting in order to secure that the hitherto substantial and thorough consultation process on the Green Paper on SGI is properly concluded.

ETUCE and the Service Federations will strongly call on Mr. Prodi to ensure the promotion of quality public services as a key aspect of the European social model.

For some time now ETUCE has actively campaigned for a broad legal framework on SGI at EU level. Furthermore, ETUCE advocates the concept of high quality services of general interest being integrated into the definition in the Treaty of the objectives and the activities of the European Union on a par with the creation of the internal market.

The Green Paper on SGI prepares the ground for establishing a legal framework on SGI in the EU. ETUCE and the Service Federations welcome the European Parliament's (EP) overall approach to this matter in that the EP, in its report adopted on 14 January 2004 on the Green Paper, reconfirmed its support of a general legislative framework on SGI. ETUCE agrees with the EP that a legal framework should set out common public service

¹ European Federation of Public Service Unions.

² European Trade Union Federation for Services and Communication.

³ European Transport Workers' Federation.

principles, clarifying the demarcation lines with competition rules, setting out principles for funding issues etc. In particular, ETUCE works to ensure that such a legal framework would exempt the education sector *per se* from EU competition rules.

However, the Commission's recent adoption of a proposal for a Directive on Services in the internal market, as well as the Commission's forthcoming adoption of a package of measures on the application of state aid for Services of General Economic Interest, both entail implications for SGI that could compromise the otherwise positive prospects for Europe's public services launched in the Commission's Green Paper on SGI.

The Directive on Services in the internal market aims at removing all barriers to cross-border trade in services. While it relates to trade in services, it nevertheless potentially narrows the scope left for promoting quality public services.

The meeting with Mr. Prodi will take place on 31 March 2004.

ETUCE calls on members of the European Parliament to vote in favour of the phasing-out of individual opt outs of working time regulations

ETUCE sent an urgent appeal to several members of the European Parliament (EP) prior to the vote on 11 February 2004 on a Parliament Committee own-initiative report on the revision of the existing Working Time Directive (93/104/EC). ETUCE urged MEPs to vote in favour of the report, which recommends that the temporary opportunity to provide an individual option for employees to opt out of the directive's rule of a maximum 48-hours working week should be abolished as soon as possible. The EP adopted the report drafted by Alejandro Cercas Alonso (PES) by a large majority.

ETUCE highlighted to the members of EP the findings of a recent study in the United Kingdom, which shows that individual opt outs from the working time maximum rule are widely misused to the detriment of the health and safety of employees. Since the introduction in the UK of the individual opt out clause, the average weekly working time has increased; hence working weeks of over 50 hours are not uncommon.

The individual opt out provision in the existing Working Time Directive resulted from the wish to create flexibility in the regulation of working time. So far, only the UK has made use of the individual opt out clause, but several more countries now wish to apply it. ETUCE emphasised to MEPs that we are of the clear opinion that any derogation from the common rules of

regulation of working time should be based on national collective bargaining between the parties in the labour market.

Flexibility in working time regulations is important, but the existing Working Time Directive's reference period of four months for the 48-hour working week provides for sufficient flexibility while also protecting the health and safety of workers.

The closing date for the open consultation on the Commission's Communication on the revision of the Working Time Directive is 31 March 2004. At the ETUC Executive Board meeting on 17-18 March a common strategy for action was adopted. ETUCE will separately forward all the relevant documents from this meeting to member organisations.

ETUCE seeks formal participation in the Bologna Process

ETUCE has intensified its advocacy for recognition as a consultative member of the Bologna Process. Recently, ETUCE issued a letter to Education Commissioner Viviane Reding and the Irish Presidency, asking for a meeting to obtain support for ETUCE to be formally represented in the process. A similar letter will be sent to the Norwegian Minister, who is responsible for planning the next Bologna ministerial conference in Bergen in 2005.

The Bologna Process was initiated in 1999 by European Ministers of Higher Education and aims to build a European Area of Higher Education by 2010. So far, organisations representing institutions of Higher Education and students have formally joined the process as consultative members of the recently established Bologna Follow Up Group, but organisations representing teachers and researchers have yet to be included.

At the Berlin Summit on Higher Education in September 2003, which was the second meeting of the European Ministers of Education to evaluate the Bologna Process, Commissioner Reding expressed in her speech her support for the inclusion of ETUCE in the formal follow-up structure, but this has yet to be accepted by the governing bodies.

In the letter to Commissioner Reding, ETUCE emphasised the commitment and support of the Bologna Process which ETUCE has exerted so far, notably in organising a joint EI/GEW/ETUCE Forum on "*Shaping the European Area of Higher Education and Research*" in April 2003. Moreover, ETUCE stressed the importance of giving all the partners engaged in academic work a

chance to play a role in shaping the Bologna Process in order to secure a successful outcome.

ETUCE and EI will call upon member organisations in the 40 signatory countries to put pressure on their national ministers through similar requests for meetings. To this end, a model letter will be sent to all member organisations.

For more information on the follow-up of the Bologna Process, visit the website: www.bologna-bergen2005.no

Council Meeting – Education, Youth and Culture

The Council (Education, Youth and Culture) met in Brussels on 26 February 2004.

The two main points discussed at the meeting concerned the follow up of the Lisbon strategy and the new Europass proposal set forth by the European Commission.

Education & Training 2010

In 2001, the EU Ministers of Education agreed on three strategic targets for the EU education sector to be attained in order to meet the goal set by the Lisbon strategy of making the EU education systems a worldwide quality reference by 2010. The three targets are:

- improving the quality and effectiveness of EU education and training systems;
- facilitating the access of all to education and training systems;
- opening up education and training systems to the wider world.

In the context of the follow up process for these targets, the Council adopted on 26 February 2004 a joint Commission and Council interim report on the implementation of the detailed work programme established in 2002 to pursue the objectives of education and training systems in Europe. The report, entitled "Education & Training 2010 – the success of the Lisbon strategy hinges on urgent reforms",⁴ presents an assessment of progress already made and proposes guidelines for further action to be taken in order to obtain the goals.

The key message of the joint interim report is that, in order to make the European Union the leading knowledge-based economy

⁴ The report is available at:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/policies/2010/doc/jir_council_final.pdf

in the world, there is an urgent need to increase investment in human resources. Three main priority areas for action are identified:

- focus reform and investment on the key areas for the knowledge-based society;
- make lifelong learning a concrete reality;
- establish a Europe of Education and Training.

As examples of significant progress made at EU level the report emphasises the adoption of the "Erasmus Mundus" and "eLearning" programmes as well as the enhancement of cooperation in the area of Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education.

The report will be presented to the Spring European Council on 25-26 March 2004.

Europass

The Council held a policy debate on the Commission's proposal for a new Europass – the creation of a single portfolio for documents relating to citizens' diplomas, qualifications and competences, which aims to improve transparency and facilitate mobility within the EU.

Delegations stressed the importance of giving the Europass portfolio a broad and open scope, notably by including not only academic and professional qualifications, but also general individual competences. Furthermore, the necessity of ensuring the veracity of information in the portfolio, as well as the importance of publicising the advantages of using the Europass, were underlined.

The Council is expected to reach political agreement on the proposal at its meeting on 27 May 2004. The new Europass is outlined in more detail in a subsequent article in this ETUCE newsletter.

"Education & Training 2010": Restricted call for proposals

The European Commission's Directorate-General for Education and Culture has announced a restricted call for proposals to support activities related to giving greater visibility to the "Education & Training 2010" work programme at national level. This call for proposals comes in the light of the recently adopted interim report on the implementation of the Lisbon strategy in the field of education and training, which underlines the need to enhance the profile and visibility of this work programme.

Applicants must be national authorities. ETUCE calls upon its member organisations to encourage their national governments to organise activities and apply for funding. Promotion activities which the Commission aims to support include seminars, conferences and workshops involving the main actors and stakeholders at national level. The closing date for submission of applications is 15 April 2004. For further information please contact the ETUCE secretariat.

Meetings of the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport

On 26-27 January and 18-19 February, ETUCE attended the first two meetings in 2004 of the European Parliament Committee on Culture, Youth, Education, the Media and Sport.

Within the field of education, one of the main topics discussed was the role of schools in raising cultural awareness. The Committee wishes to launch a debate on the need for further initiatives at EU as well as national level to promote the role of school education in maximising public access to culture. In the context of EU enlargement, the Committee wishes to enhance the role European education systems play in fostering knowledge of and respect for the cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe alongside raising awareness of the sharing of a common cultural heritage.

The Committee adopted on 19 February an own-initiative report on the subject, which was subsequently adopted at the European Parliament Plenary Session on 26 February.

The report is available at:

<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//NONSGML+REPORT+A5-2004-0080+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=2&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

Europass – increasing transparency of qualifications and competences

In December 2003, the Commission adopted a proposal for a decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a single framework for the transparency of qualifications and competences. The proposal, which is entitled *Europass*, aims to help citizens communicate their skills more effectively to employers, education institutions, and vocational education and training institutions in other European countries.

Europass incorporates documents already existing into a coherent document portfolio. Initially, the Europass framework will consist of five documents:

The European CV

The document is based upon the already existing common European CV format, which has been available since 2002. The CV provides the citizen with the opportunity to present his/her qualifications and competences in a systematic, chronological order. Changes to the new format only concerns terminology. The European CV is the core element in the portfolio.

Mobilipass

The current Europass-Training will be replaced by *Mobilipass*, meant to record experiences of transnational mobility for learning purposes. The document will be based on the current Europass-Training with some alterations. The *Mobilipass* aims to facilitate descriptions of competences and experiences obtained in any European country.

The Diploma Supplement

This document is a supplement to degree certificates from higher education institutions. It provides information related to the contents of the degree certificate regarding the competences, skills etc. acquired by the holder. The existing document will not need any changes to be brought into the Europass.

Certificate Supplement

This document concerns vocational education and training. It is an attachment to a vocational certificate, providing a detailed description of the qualification acquired.

The European Language Portfolio

The European Language Portfolio, which was launched by the Council of Europe in 2001 in connection with The European Year of Languages, is a document in which holders can record their language proficiencies. The Language Portfolio comprises three parts: a language passport, a language biography, and a dossier for examples of personal work illustrating language competences.

At present, the five documents are separately administered, making a coherent coordination of these communication tools more difficult. The key concepts behind the Europass initiative are therefore rationalisation and simplification. The use of the Europass portfolio is an opportunity offered to citizens, not an obligation.

The proposal for a decision on the new Europass is expected to be adopted by the Council by the end of 2004. The official launch of the Europass would thus take place at the major conference to be held in Maastricht in December 2004. ETUCE has been invited to this conference.

Social Dialogue Negotiations on Stress at Work

In April 2003, ETUC began work on setting up negotiations with the European Employers' organisations (UNICE⁵/CEEP⁶) on a framework agreement on work-related stress. Five negotiating sessions have taken place so far.

In the course of the negotiations, a number of difficult issues have been dealt with, including how to define stress, whether and how to classify potential causes of stress and the approach to be taken to diminish stress. Issues on which the two sides of the agreement took different stands from the outset. However, the negotiations have now made significant progress, the overall structure of the agreement has been drawn up and the final result is expected to be presented to the ETUC Executive Committee in June 2004.

Updated and more detailed information on the Social Dialogue negotiations on stress at work will follow in the next issue of the ETUCE newsletter.

eSchoolnet portal for European teachers re-launched

The eSchoolnet portal offered by European Schoolnet was re-launched on 10 February 2004. The portal contains extensive resources for teachers, comprising, amongst other things, education news, practice examples, national education fact files and online communities to exchange information with colleagues across Europe.

In addition to facilitating access to information about educational content from all over Europe and the use of technology in teaching, the portal aims to promote international projects through offering a range of communication possibilities, including partner-finding tools to establish contact with other schools.

The portal is available at: www.eschoolnet.org

⁵ Union of Industrial and Employers' Confederations of Europe.

⁶ European Centre of Enterprises with Public Participation and of Enterprises of General Economic Interest.

Calls for proposals announced by the European Commission

Please click on the related hyperlink for more information on each of the calls for proposals.

- **European cooperation with the United States and Canada**

The European Commission has announced calls for proposals under the cooperation programmes with the United States and Canada in higher education and vocational education and training.

The United States

Activities centred on development of transatlantic cooperation on student mobility, international curricula, as well as the study of research and lecturing on EU affairs or EU-US relations in EU and the United States respectively, are eligible to apply for funding under this programme.

Deadline for applications: 23 April 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/eu-usa/usa_en.html#call

Canada

This programme supports projects which focus on student mobility, exchanges and teaching assignments for teachers, trainers, administrators and other relevant specialists, as well as the development of international curricula.

Deadline for applications: 30 April 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/eu-canada/canada_en.html#call

- **Transfer of innovation from the Leonardo da Vinci programme**

Projects setting out to transfer innovative content developed under the Leonardo da Vinci I and II programmes to and by various private and public vocational training centres, companies, schools, etc. are the aim of this call for proposals.

Deadline for applications: 1 June 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/leonardo/new/leonardo2/callinnov/index_en.html

- **EU-Australia Cooperation in the field of higher education**

Jointly with the Australian department of Education, Science and Technology, the Commission calls for proposals for a project aimed at setting up a framework for student mobility at postgraduate level through the development of a joint study programme by higher education institutions in the EU and Australia.

Deadline for applications: 16 June 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/australia/australia_en.html

- **EU-New Zealand Cooperation in the field of higher education**

The Commission and the New Zealand Tertiary Education have announced a call for proposals for a project aimed at setting up a student mobility framework between the EU and New Zealand similar to the above cooperation programme between the EU and Australia.

Deadline for applications: 16 June 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/calls/newzealand/newzealand_en.html

- **Erasmus Mundus programme**

A draft call for proposals under this recently adopted cooperation and mobility programme is available now. The final call for proposals will be published in early April 2004, but applicants are invited to read the preliminary information available at present.

Deadline for applications for activities related to the academic year 2004-2005: Spring 2004.

http://europa.eu.int/comm/education/programmes/mundus/index_en.html

New publications from the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI)

Equal pay and gender mainstreaming in the European Employment Strategy.
Edited by Lars Magnusson, Lilja Mosesdottir and Amparo Serrano Pascual.
ETUI / SALTSA. 453 pages, Dec. 2003.

Representativeness of public sector trade unions in Europe – State administration and local government sectors.
A joint EPSU – ETUI study.
Feb. 2004. Available in English, French, German, Swedish and Spanish.

TRANSFER: EMU five years on.
The latest issue of *TRANSFER*, the journal of the European Trade Union Institute.
No. 4/2003.

New publications from Eurydice – the Information Network on Education in Europe

Evaluation of Schools providing Compulsory Education in Europe.
March 2004. Available in English, French and German.
Online location: <http://www.eurydice.org/Documents/EvalS/en/FrameSet.htm>