

GMB warns: Jobless growth no solution to crisis

The EU is set for jobless growth with no recovery in sight for Europe's 27mn unemployed and at risk of poverty. The latest EU economic forecast (Annual Growth Survey) claims that we will see a "turning point" in 2014, though unimpressive growth figures are doing nothing to improve unemployment which remains persistently high across many Member States and with further increases even predicted in France and Italy.



The latest forecasts confirm what GMB has long warned – growth does not automatically translate into jobs. Job-led growth needs to be the focus for EU governments and companies, and requires targeted investment, not cuts and austerity. How many years of this kind of miserable forecast do the EU Commission and Member States need to see before they acknowledge they were wrong? ETUC [proposals for 2014 growth](#), including an end to austerity and race to the bottom, could generate up to 11mn new quality jobs.

GMB joins with EU unions to help young jobseekers

GMB has welcomed Nestlé's plan to create 1,900 employment opportunities for young people in the UK and Ireland over the next three years through the EU Youth Employment Initiative, and is urging other companies to follow suit. Investing in young people to give them hope for a brighter future and ensure a skilled workforce is maintained, should be

the rule for all companies operating across the EU, not the exception.



Time to act on youth unemployment

An EU forum against youth unemployment has made key recommendations including the creation of a 'youth charter' with common principles on employment, internships, apprenticeships and volunteering to ensure young people stop being exploited and are given access to the labour market they need. The young participants stressed the importance for them to be actively involved in shaping these policies. Meanwhile, at a high-level conference on youth unemployment, EU Heads of State (Cameron was conspicuously absent) vowed to implement fully the EU Youth Guarantee Scheme, though with only €6bn of EU funding earmarked to go round 28 Member States, young people's future will still depend on the political will of national governments. More than 1 in 5 young people in Europe are currently unemployed – and over half of young people in Greece and Spain.

GMB continues to push for EU action on blacklisting

GMB is pleased to report that after securing provisions banning blacklisting within EU data protection rules, the issue has also been included in draft EU Parliament proposals on **effective labour inspections**, with the help and support of Socialist MEPs **Jutta Steinruck** and **Evelyn Regner**.

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EU Court's attack on workers violates Social Charter

Swedish legislation introduced after the European Court of Justice ruling on the Laval case, which attacked trade union rights and freedoms, violates the European Social Charter the Council of Europe has stated. This follows an ETUC and Swedish affiliates' complaint against the judgement for putting 'fundamental economic freedoms' above social rights and severely restricting the rights of posted workers' and of trade unions' to strike and bargain collectively. GMB and EU trade union colleagues have welcomed the decision and urge the Swedish Government to amend its legislation immediately so that these rights may now be fully respected.

EU business bias taints expert groups

The EU Commission continues to put the interests of big business first despite giving assurances to the EU Parliament it would use funding to ensure balanced advisory expert groups, a new [report](#) by ALTER-EU, the Austrian Trade Union Confederation and Chamber of Labour has revealed.



The Commission department responsible for tax is the worst offender, where almost 80% of stakeholders represent corporate interests, compared to a laughable 1% for trade unions. The EU Federation of Public Services Unions holds the only trade union seat on the Commission's good tax governance platform, which is completely dominated by business and tax experts with vested interests less likely to support progress towards greater transparency and tax justice. "By inviting notorious advocates of tax havens and corporate tax avoidance to an expert group charged with tackling that problem, the Commission is making a mockery of its intentions to recoup the €1 trillion lost by EU Member States every year", commented EPSU, adding that

the Commission "needs to stop listening to corporations and their damaging deregulatory agendas and start prioritising the interests of its citizens and workers".

EU Parliament Socialists meanwhile have called for an end to tax fraud, evasion and havens, and the social dumping they create through 'innovative' employment tourism schemes, which allow companies to avoid paying taxes and decent wages whilst maximising their own profits.

New EU Robin Hood campaign launched



The coalition of Europeans For Financial Reform has launched its new website as a further step in the campaign for the EU financial transaction (Robin Hood) tax to be launched by 11 Member States next January. The move continues to meet with intensive lobbying from the financial industry for the proposals to be scrapped. **Visit:** www.financialtransactiontax.eu for more information and to sign up to the campaign.

Major employers say no to UK EU exit

Nissan's CEO has joined a growing list of major employers in the UK firmly supporting continued EU membership. He warns of the jobs and investment that could be lost should the UK leave the EU, as companies relocate to stay within the EU Single Market. A recent CBI report admits that 80% of its members would vote to stay in and acknowledges that the UK benefits from an extra 4-5% of

GDP or £62-78bn a year thanks to EU membership – "a timely reminder of the madness of withdrawing from the EU, for jobs, growth and living standards", said GMB MEP and Labour EU Leader **Glenis Willmott**. GMB emphasises that companies wanting to stay in the EU must accept keeping social and employment rights intact too.

EU Trade Union Action Update

 **Ireland:** Over 3,000 **junior doctors** have gone on strike over dangerously long working hours after failed talks with the HSE, which refuses to impose sanctions on hospitals that do not respect EU **Working Time** legislation.

 **Spain:** Spanish **coal miners** held a 2-day work stoppage after a lethal accident – the worst in almost two decades – left 6 dead and many more injured. This follows the death of 3 German miners less than a month before. "It is unbelievable and unacceptable in this age that miners still lose their lives", commented **IndustriALL Global Union**, which will continue to campaign for safe mines worldwide and calls on authorities to launch an urgent investigation into the causes of both accidents.

 **Greece:** **Civil service** and **private sector** trade union confederations – which together represent over half the country's workforce – held a joint 24-hour general strike and national demonstrations on 6 November against the threat of another round of cuts and austerity. Workers have already lost an average of 40% in disposable income since 2009, and over a quarter of the population, and two-thirds of young people, are now unemployed.

 **Cyprus:** The Government has made drastic cuts to **nurses'** pay and conditions without any prior dialogue with trade unions and employers' organisations, and which come on top of even more cuts to **health workers** in general. **EPSU**, the European Public Services union federation, has expressed its concerns and demanded the government engage in proper social dialogue. Nurses and other public sector workers also held a day of protest against cuts and austerity.

 **Portugal:** **Public sector** workers held a national 24-hour strike on 8 November in protest at the latest budget cuts and further attacks on pay, pensions and other employment conditions, and are calling for the government to resign. 9 out of 10 will have their salary cut by between 2.5-12%.

 **Bulgaria:** The Government has announced, with no prior trade union consultation, a 10% cut in **public sector** jobs, which could affect up to 40,000 workers. **ETUC** condemned the moves, giving its full support to Bulgarian unions – which demonstrated on 20 November for higher pay and labour rights protections.

 **Croatia:** Trade unions have backed 4,000 **shipyard** workers who have gone on strike over government plans to privatise shipyards and delay wage payment. Disciplinary proceedings have been opened against those who took part in the protests.

Independent Scotland out of Europe

By David Martin MEP

The question of Scottish membership of the European Union has come full-circle in the past two years. From the nationalists' insistence that Scotland's uninterrupted membership was cut-and-dry, we have tumbled through parliamentary questions, expert advice, threatened legal action and arrived back at the point that the issue is indeed quite simple: Scotland will have to reapply and even the fast lane to EU membership is a long road.

The EU Commission was quite clear in its interpretation. In 2004 it stated that "when part of the territory of a Member State ceases to be a part of that state, e.g. because that territory becomes an independent state, the treaties will no longer apply in that territory. In other words, a newly independent region would, by the fact of its independence, become a third country with respect to the Union and the treaties would, from the day of its independence, not apply anymore on its territory." It confirmed this position this year.

The idea that Scotland could secure independence in the morning and have the Saltire flying for the 29th Member State by dinnertime is as arrogant as it is fanciful. Don't get me wrong, I think negotiations for membership would begin quite far

down the track. We have heard claims that Scotland would be welcomed with open arms because of our fishing water and oil reserves – would that negotiations for EU membership were so simple!



Pro-independence supporters are less keen to admit that as a new applicant to the EU, Scotland would not have an opt-out from the Euro and would be obliged to join when it met the economic conditions. The opt-out to Schengen's open borders would also be lost. Furthermore, some other EU countries, like Spain or Belgium, under pressure from their own independence movements, would not embrace Scotland's membership.

Do I think these obstacles could be overcome? Eventually, yes. But the lengthy process would not only jeopardise our employment rights

during the years of negotiations, it would leave us no better off in pursuing strong social-democratic principles at EU level.

I commend GMB members for giving serious consideration to the implications of this issue from all angles, and have been glad to help support their wide-ranging consultation process which led to their recent decision to support a No vote in the referendum on Scottish independence.

Solidarity among people across Europe is crucial in the face of the continuing right-wing attacks on jobs, services and rights. Putting up barriers and isolating ourselves from our neighbours is not the answer. We are at our best when we tackle common problems together at every level. Blacklisting is as wrong in Glasgow as it is in Gloucester and Gothenburg. We should reject a nationalist ideology of separation in the UK and EU and look to build alliances for progressive change to the benefit of all.

In or Out – But what is the question?

The UK Electoral Commission has published its assessment of the question in the Tory-led EU referendum bill: that its ambiguous wording could lead to misunderstanding as to whether or not the UK is currently an EU Member State. The question currently reads: "Do you think that the United Kingdom should be a member of the European Union?", but the Electoral Commission recommends changing it to: "Should the United Kingdom remain a member of the European Union?"

The Commons held further debates on the referendum plan this month, overwhelmingly rejecting a rebel Tory amendment attempting to push the referendum date forward from 2017 to next October. Labour MPs continue to try to delay the bill's passage through Parliament.

Labour MEPs vote to scrap wasteful Strasbourg

Labour MEPs voted in the EU Parliament this week to end the pointless monthly plenary trips to Strasbourg, which would save European taxpayers millions. GMB MEP and Labour spokesperson on EU constitutional affairs **David Martin** commented: "Splitting the Parliament between Strasbourg and Brussels is not an effective use of taxpayers' money, nor is it good for the environment", with Labour's EU leader GMB MEP **Glenis Willmott** adding: "The £150mn annual cost of

having more than one seat is scandalous, at a time when Europe is under the yoke of austerity". The EU Commission will now have to conduct a poll of EU public opinion on the one-seat campaign which, if favourable, would put the Member States under increasing pressure to bow to public and MEP demand. Currently, only Heads of State can decide, unanimously, on where the Parliament should sit, and moves to scrap Strasbourg have been continuously blocked by France and Germany.

EU action on gender equality

MEPs have overwhelmingly voted for a minimum 40% **quota of women on non-executive boards** of EU companies by 2020. Only 17.6% are women currently. “We now need a stronger focus on taking action to deliver change”, said Labour MEP **Arlene McCarthy**, adding “Companies need to invest in women making it easier for them to continue in corporate life”. Socialist calls to have the quota apply to *all* boards were voted down by the Parliament’s right-wing majority.

An EU Commission [report](#) on **women in decision-making** shows that although the number of women on company boards has increased in 20 EU Member States over the past year, especially in those that have already introduced mandatory quotas, the **rate is actually dropping in the UK!**

MEPs have also adopted a Resolution on **Equal Pay**, demanding urgent EU and Member State action to close the gender pay gap. Tory and UKIP MEPs did not support the proposals, even though

the UK is the 6th worst EU offender with a pay gap close to 20%. This resolution “is only the first step in a long journey towards gender equality”, notes Labour MEP **Mary Honeyball**, “but it symbolises a joint commitment by EU countries to eliminate the gap”. Socialist MEPs have slammed the EU Parliament’s centre-right majority, which opposed a resolution supporting **sexual and reproductive health rights** for all in Europe and worldwide, sending the text back to the drawing board in committee. Socialists said the political right had dragged women’s rights back 30 years, but vowed to keep up the fight.

A Eurofound [report](#) explores **gender and inequality issues in the workplace** – comparing the different jobs of men and women in both the public and private sectors. Despite significant progress over the past 40 years, gender-based discrimination is still rife, from labour market access to employment patterns and working conditions.

Getting immigration in perspective

Immigration minister Mark Harper emphasised there will be no mass Romanian and Bulgarian migration to the UK once restrictions are lifted next year, saying it would be a “fool’s errand” to predict how many might come – a position not shared by others in his party, as Tory right-wingers and UKIP claim the entire population of the 2 countries will come to the UK. Britain however is not the destination of choice, with Spain, Italy and Germany far more likely to be favoured.

A new [study](#) by University College London corroborates what GMB has long been saying: European migrants make a net contribution to the UK economy, putting in considerably more taxes than they claim back in benefits. GMB also emphasises that there are currently 2.2mn UK people living and working elsewhere in the EU – the 5th largest EU population living outside its own borders.

OTHER NEWS IN BRIEF:

EU minimum wage Eurofound has [analysed](#) the different EU wage bargaining systems and the potential benefits of an EU-wide minimum wage policy.

Socialists back Social Europe EU Socialist Governments have published [Guidelines](#) for a fair, social and sustainable Europe – where economic and social policies are developed equally, to achieve job-led growth, an end to unemployment and sustainable budgets with well-regulated financial services.

EU skills passport Socialist MEPs have led the way for the introduction of a European professional card recognising qualifications to help workers more easily move to another EU country for work (including internships and training).

Socialists fight corruption The EU Parliament has adopted a Socialist group report calling for more EU action to fight corruption and stop human rights abuses in third countries by EU companies supporting corrupt regimes, using tax havens, etc.

Austerity failure In a series of 5 [briefings](#), the EU Federation of Public Services Unions will analyse the impact of cuts and austerity, why and how it failed, the pain and misery it is causing workers, and the need for an urgent change of policy to achieve a sustainable recovery and job-led growth.

Bigger role for EWCs GMB attended the annual European Works Council conference, which this year focused on increasing the role and involvement of EWCs, particularly as regards good corporate governance and companies’ sustainability and environmental policies.

Rights for seasonal workers New rules steered through the EU Parliament by Labour MEP **Claude Moraes** will significantly improve labour and social conditions and reduce inequalities, discrimination and exploitation for over 100,000 third country migrants who come to the EU as seasonal workers each year – mainly in the agriculture and tourism sectors.

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

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GMB and EU support sees Medway Queen come home



The historic and Dunkirk veteran Medway Queen paddle steamer has arrived back home in Rochester, Kent following restoration works in Bristol. The GMB European office and GMB members of the Medway Queen Preservation Society were instrumental in gaining EU funding for the project through the Heroes 2C EU regional aid, which also financed workshops to train young people through apprenticeships. GMB is delighted to see this progress with the project.