



# NEWS

EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR WORKERS' QUESTIONS • NO. 1 / 2018

## OVERVIEW

### ■ Luc Cortebeek at the EZA General Assembly



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## EDITORIAL



*Dear Readers and Friends of EZA,*

*What is the added value to Europe of a cup of coffee? Or: Are you familiar with the European "Cappuccino Index"? What odd questions, you may think. The EU is bang in the middle of a debate on the future Multiannual Financial Framework. Jean-Claude Juncker recently appealed to the member states to provide more funds to close the gap in the future EU budget caused by Brexit and new areas of responsibility such as defence, migration and climate change: "It costs the European taxpayer one cup of coffee a*

*day, that's all. And I think Europe is [worth] more than one cup of coffee a day." So, how much – more – is Europe worth to us, the Europe we once founded to defend our values and pursue our goals together? How much are peace, freedom, democracy, the rule of law, the social market economy, and opportunities for all citizens in Europe worth to us? It makes sense to invest EU funds in future primarily in projects that have added value for Europe. EZA's education work, which invests in people, strengthens social dialogue and thus the social dimension in Europe, satisfies this criterion... in the coming months we will all be called on to fight on a national and European level for sufficient funding of social projects!*

*PS: Incidentally, according to Politico's "Cappuccino Index", for the citizens of most EU member states it costs even less than half a cup of coffee on average.*

*Sigrid Schraml, Secretary-General*

## Focal topics of the EZA 2018 education programme

The focuses of the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA) 2018 education programme are the topics of "New labour relations: digitalisation and trade union strategies", "Working and living in a digitised world", "European pillar of social rights" and "Quality of work". In addition, the topic of "Strategies of European institutions" is being continued, this year concentrating on "capacity building". The special project for workers' organisations in the Western Balkans is likewise being continued. Other topics include "Integrating migrants and refugees in the labour market", "Youth employment and inclusive labour markets" and "Health and safety at work: healthy workplaces".

Details of the education programme are available as of now on the [EZA website](#). The kick-off seminar is the CNV (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond) seminar on "The future of Europe - the social dimension", being held in Utrecht/the Netherlands from 5 to 6 April 2018.

*Victoria Znined* ■

# The 100th anniversary of the ILO – a look back. The 200th anniversary – a preview

Speech of Luc Cortebeek, Chair of the Governing Body of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), at the General Assembly of the European Centre for Workers' Questions (EZA), Copenhagen, Denmark, 2 December 2017

Thank you for your kind invitation. These are busy and challenging times, and this is particularly true at the ILO. Very interesting for you because last year EZA was awarded the observer status of the ILO. (...)

You asked me to look back over the last 100 years and to look forward to the 200th anniversary. (...)

Let me first refer to President Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1941, he spoke to a Tripartite Conference of the ILO in the White House. He looked back to the beginnings of the ILO, in which he had been personally involved.

Looking back to 1919, Roosevelt said: "In those days the ILO was still a dream. Who had ever heard of Governments getting together to raise the standards of labour on an international plane? Wilder still was the idea that the people themselves who were directly affected – the workers and the employers of the various countries – should have a hand with Governments in determining these labour standards." (...)

Employers were not enthusiastic about the ILO. But some thought that the new tripartite arrangements could foster useful cooperation with trade unions in situations where both felt parties that the state interventionist attempts needed to be contained. (...)

Not all trade unions were convinced of the usefulness of the ILO, some saw it as class collaboration. Mutual recognition of the two sides as collective bargaining partners became a reality only on the eve of the Second World War. (...)

A lot changed with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. This was one of the important push factors of globalisation. (...) The social market model was under pressure. (...)

The 2008 financial and debt crisis was a new challenge for the ILO, and in 2012



the employers' group questioned the objectivity of the Experts' Committee in its annual evaluation on the application of conventions and recommendations in every country, and the employers attacked the universal right to strike, too. It was a real crisis in the ILO because one of the constituents didn't believe in the ILO model anymore.

I was the workers' negotiator and after more than two years, in early 2015, we managed to come to an agreement with the employers about some interpretations. This was and remains an important breakthrough. (...)

But let us not only look back to the past 100 years of the ILO but face the future. (...) As Chair of the Governing Body of the ILO I am an ex officio member of the Global Commission on the Future of Work. (...) The discussion about the future of work reaches us in times where certainties disappear. (...)

Some 201 million people are without a job and underemployment is on the rise. Precarious and informal work are increasing. (...)

Globalisation was a positive trigger in countries or sub-regions that regulated it. But the overwhelming policy of non-regulation left us with disastrous effects.

The shockwave of globalisation is only reaching us now. Our societies are paying a heavy price for it. And this is the ground on which the "future of work" is sown. (...)

The future of work we want is a regulated one; the future of work is not about one but about seven challenges:

1. New technologies (...)
2. Need for jobs (...)
3. Migration (...)
4. Explosion of "non-standard forms of work" (...)
5. Increasing inequality (...)
6. Sustainable development (...)
7. Companies (...)

The ILO will need to handle the combination of these complex challenges. How to do this? Well, let us try with seven routes for action:

1. Research and permanent follow-up (...)
2. Jobs, unfulfilled demand presents a great potential (...)
3. Wages and social protection (...)
4. Upgrading, recalibrating labour regulation, no deregulation (...)
5. Companies focusing on sustainable investment/growth (...)
6. Need for social stability (...)

Ladies and Gentlemen, the 7th route is "Work cannot be a commodity. In 1919 the ILO was founded with the famous sentence "... universal and lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice." In 2017, people, workers do not feel recognised.

Let us embrace the future of work by reconnecting to people's and workers' expectations, to the real economy, to the real society.

Thank you!

The speech in full can be found on the [EZA website](#).

## Debate on the reform of the French Labour Code – the trade union perspective

If it is a good idea to simplify our Labour Code or not, these reductions will not, however, solve our problems. In fact, in the context of a single market and increasing globalisation, we suffer real unfair competition in fiscal, environmental and social terms.

I will give you just one example.

You win the lottery and are passionate about cleaning products – do you choose to build a detergent production plant in France or Bulgaria? If you choose the former, you will have to observe a number of fiscal, environmental and social rules. If the latter, your obligations will be less burdensome, whereas you will be competing in the same market. You play the same game, but with different rules. Hundreds of thousands of jobs are at stake.

The amendments proposed by the government address only the fringe of this challenge, and again this fringe is structurally flawed by a purely materialist vision of the world of work.

The most shocking is the capping of the compensation an employee can receive in damages for a loss or injury.

From now on, the guiding legal principle by which a judge, having identified and assessed a loss or injury, can set compensation commensurate with the loss or damage suffered by the victim applies to everyone except workers.

The Association of Judges reacted by stating that “this plan represents an unprecedented, extremely serious attack on the office of the judge”.

Another worrying point is the increase in companies’ scope for negotiation which will allow, for instance, an employer to cut allowances (at the start of the academic term, maternity, seniority etc.) provided for by collective agreement. It is an open door to social dumping, a dangerous process that drags the entire community into a downward spiral.

What is the logic in saying you want to combat unfair competition in Europe, whilst encouraging this dangerous pro-

cess in our country? The argument put forward is that of proximity: the company that knows its customers, its market, its obligations, its prospects, would be more capable of establishing its own rules. In fact, what might seem to make good sense is but the enshrining in the texts of the hyper-individualism that is eroding our society.

For CFTC, the sector is a good level of regulation. It knows its specific features, constraints and possibilities. It is in the interest of a profession to be able to operate in fair competition, where everyone has the same rights and the same duties. When a sector sets minimum wages or a longer period of maternity leave than the national standard, this is a guarantee that in this sector genuine competition between companies will not be in pursuit of the lowest pay or to the detriment of mothers.

If it is possible in small firms to circumvent the obligation to pay allowances provided for by collective agreement, what guarantee is there that a principal will not oblige a subcontractor to cut said allowances in order to reduce production costs? The small firm will have to choose between complying or losing its client.

Another threat is the change in the scope of redundancies. Today, if a multinational wants to lay off employees, it is its situation in the countries where it is established that is taken into account when its financial difficulties are assessed. With the regulations, only its results in France count. One has to be extremely naive to think that companies which organise their affairs to pay practically no tax on national territory will be unable to engineer schemes for burdening the accounts of their French divisions to justify redundancies.

I fear that the imperatives of materialist ideology will prevail over some basic principles such as respect for the value of work which, as stated by the Church’s social doctrine, “is not a simple commodity or an impersonal element of the production organisation”, the human person being “the measure of the dignity of work”.



**Joseph THOUVENEL**

Married with 2 children  
Vice-President of the CFTC (*Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens* - French Confederation of Christian Workers)  
He started working at the age of 16 in horticulture, did his national service in the 9th Paratroopers Regiment, and worked five years as cleaner.

After joining a brokerage firm as a revenue clerk, he became a negotiator for an auction group, then was in charge of subscriptions/allocations in a brokerage firm.

He was member of the supervisory authorities for the financial markets in France, the *Conseil des Bourses des Valeurs* (CBV, Stock Market Council), the *Conseil des Marchés Financiers* (CMF, Financial Markets Council) and the sanctions committee of the *Autorité des Marchés Financiers* (AMF, Financial Markets Authority).  
He is a member of the EZA (European Centre for Workers’ Questions) Council, member of the Executive Committee of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and member of the Executive Committee of the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC).

He is a member of the French Economic, Social and Environmental Council (*Conseil Économique, Social et Environnemental*).

Auditor of the 53rd session of the IHEDN (*Institut des Hautes Études de la Défense Nationale*, Higher Education Institute for Homeland Defence).

He has humanitarian experience:

- In France: 10 years providing support services for the homeless
- Abroad: humanitarian missions, particularly in war zones

He is also a radio and TV commentator.

Author of “*Chroniques Chrétiennes Sociales et Sociétales*” published by TEQUI

*Joseph Thouvenel*

*Vice-President of the Confédération Française des Travailleurs Chrétiens (French Confederation of Christian Workers)*



## European Sunday Alliance

For years now, working hours in Europe have become increasingly flexible. Shift work and weekend work have constantly increased. 24-hour opening times are the norm for many shops. Sundays and public holidays are becoming normal working days, and many sectors of the economy are already treating them as such. This is having a negative impact on more and more people and their families.



These trends were pivotal in the creation of the European Sunday Alliance on 18 February 2011. A network has developed that brings together national and European alliances for a work-free Sunday, including European trade unions, employer associations, civil society organisations, churches and religious groups. In Europe, more than 100 organisations support the European Sunday Alliance ([www.europeansundayalliance.eu](http://www.europeansundayalliance.eu)).

The European Sunday Alliance has three overriding aims:

- It supports the health and safety of workers and their right to a limitation of maximum working time, and a weekly rest period that includes Sunday as a general rule.
- It warns against the increasing economic pressure currently undermining national regulations on working conditions.
- It calls on the European institutions to protect Sunday as the principle common weekly day of rest in the EU.

A work-free Sunday and decent working hours are very important to European workers. The partners in the Alliance are convinced that legal provisions and practices on an EU level and on national levels must provide better protection for health, safety and individual dignity as

well as a better balance between job and family life.

A special day of action is 3 March, the day on which in 321 AD the Roman emperor Constantine decreed that “on the venerable day of the sun let the magistrates and people living in towns rest, and let all workshops be closed” – the official date of birth of the work-free Sunday. For this reason, on 3 March national alliances will be carrying out activities to commemorate the International Day for a Work-Free Sunday.

The commitment of the European and national alliances for Sunday as a day of rest is multifaceted: national alliances are reacting to their particular political situation by organising opinion-forming campaigns with the people, political discussions, demonstrations, parliamentary initiatives, constitutional clarifications, scientific studies on the impact on health, and company campaigns against Sunday work.

European backers have gathered several times in the European Parliament for “time conferences” to discuss decent working conditions with MEPs. The impact of digitalisation on working time, especially on Sunday, and social security for workers was the focus of discussion in the last “time conference”.

In addition, the European Sunday Alliance has set up an “interest group” to support this debate on the European Parliament level. Its particular attention is on the impact of Sunday work on families, occupational health, economic consequences and social commitment, for instance voluntary work and sport.

In the process of incorporating the protection of Sunday in the European Working Time Directive, a partial success has already been achieved. The Economic and Social Committee’s statement on the balance between family and work presented its perspectives. It emphasises that there must be a common day of rest in the week. After this clear vote for a day of rest, the European Sunday Alliance hopes that it will lay the foundations for further political decisions by the Parliament and the European Council.

The Alliance partners’ credo is this: competitiveness needs innovation, innovation needs creativity, and creativity needs common free time. That is why a work-free Sunday is not only protection for workers and their families. It is also important for the economic development of Europe.

*Hannes Kreller, KAB Deutschlands (Katholische Arbeitnehmer-Bewegung Deutschlands e.V.)*

### IMPRINT

#### Published by

EZA

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#### Photos

*EZA, CFTC*

#### Frequency of publication

*Four issues a year*



*This publication receives financial support from the European Union.*