

# briefing

## European Parliamentary Labour Party

### Labour Achievements in the Workplace

In a fast moving globalised world in which borders are not enough to guarantee our security, livelihood or environment, the European Union is critical in achieving those goals which we could not secure on our own. The EU helps us amplify changes and benefits to over 500 million people across our whole continent. The recent historic deal on climate change is a clear example of how we can achieve more together than we can alone.

The economic benefits of having the single market are unquestionable. However a common market also needs common rules, not only on technical standards for products, but also on consumer protection, fair competition policy and basic aspects of employment law and social rights. This in turn means that, on such subjects, we have to fight and win our political battles at the European level and not just at national level.

Some of the achievements of which the Labour Party is most proud of have been fought and won by our Labour government in the EU Council of Ministers and by Labour MEPs in the European Parliament, whilst other Labour policies have been amplified by getting our European neighbours to sign up to the same objectives.

#### Labour achievements in the workplace

- signed Britain up to the Social Chapter, giving British workers the rights already enjoyed by their continental colleagues
- required for the first time in Britain, a guaranteed right to paid holiday

- brought in measures to give part time workers the same rights as full time workers as regards training, pensions, maternity rights and leave
- improved the rights of temporary workers regarding pay and paid leave
- implemented EU wide laws on working time, limiting the length of time workers can be obliged by their employer to work to 48 hours per week
- brought in the European works council laws giving new rights to workers in transnational companies
- introduced proper procedures for information & consultation of workers on all significant changes affecting companies with over 50 employees
- reversed the burden of proof in discrimination cases, putting the onus on employers to prove that they do not discriminate
- give both parents the right to time off when a child is born or adopted
- adopted common standards on numerous aspects of health & safety at work, including extra protection for workers using machinery which vibrates



**Socialist Group in the  
European Parliament**

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### Labour Achievements on the Environment

- increased the amount of packaging waste that must be recycled. EU member states will be obliged to recycle 55% of glass, paper, cardboard, metals and plastics by 31st December 2008
  - laid down that all electrical goods sold in the EU after 2005 will have to be recycled at the manufactures expense in the biggest recycling programme Europe has ever seen
  - approved measures to implement the Kyoto protocol to reduce greenhouse gases
  - banned single hull tankers carrying heavy fuel oil from European ports and required that black box data recorders be compulsory on all ships
  - improved air quality by adopting higher standards on the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and promoted biofuels as an alternative, thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions
  - approved new EU-wide measures to improve energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy, such as the Energy Star scheme and the Intelligent Energy for Europe programme
- made car manufacturers responsible, from 2007 onwards, for taking back old vehicles and recycling all materials from them
  - adopted measures to protect migrating birds all the way along their routes across Europe
  - set up a European-wide scheme protecting vulnerable habitats with rare species of animals and plants
  - enabled shoppers to choose green products by introducing the "eco label" awarded to products that meet strict criteria minimising the damage done to the environment
  - brought in new quality standards for bathing water, raising standards at Europe's beaches enabling tourists to avoid unpleasant surprises on their holidays
  - bought in tough new legislation to protect workers and consumers from exposure to dangerous chemicals

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