

## **European Industrial Relations and European Working Conditions Observatories**

During 2005, IRRU continued as the UK national centre for the European Industrial Relations Observatory (EIRO). Established in 1996, EIRO operates under the aegis of the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions and is based on a network of leading research institutes in 26 European countries. EIRO collects, analyses and disseminates high-quality and up-to-date information on key developments in industrial relations in Europe, primarily to serve the needs of a core audience of trade unions and employers' associations at national and European level, governments and EU institutions. IRRU has been the Observatory's UK national centre since its inception.

As the UK national centre, IRRU provides EIRO with a range of inputs including *in briefs* on key UK developments and debates; longer, more analytical *features*; and contributions to *comparative studies* which focus on a particular topical issue and its treatment across Europe. These various inputs appear as records on the Observatory's database, *EIROonline*, which is the core of EIRO's operations and is publicly accessible on the internet at <http://www.eiro.eurofound.eu.int>.

The UK's input to EIRO continued to be co-ordinated and edited by Mark Hall and Jim Arrowsmith, who were also responsible for writing a proportion of the required material. Other IRRU members and UK researchers also provided features and contributions to comparative studies. Full details of IRRU's input to EIRO over the period under review are contained in Appendix C. IRRU consistently receives a very positive editorial assessment of its EIRO input from the EIRO management team in Dublin. The most recent assessment concluded that 'the UK centre has maintained its usual exemplary level of performance'.

In March, IRRU successfully tendered to become the first UK national centre for the European Foundation's European Working Conditions Observatory (EWCO) whose output is publicly accessible at <http://www.eurofound.eu.int/ewco/>. EWCO is more recently established than EIRO, and currently covers 16 European countries. It covers developments in forms of employment and employment security; training and development; work organisation and conditions of work; and employee well-being. As UK national centre, IRRU provides EWCO with three kinds of input: news updates, which focus on major research reports; topic reports, which involves a UK overview of a specified topic; and a survey data report, focusing on a key national survey in the working conditions field. During 2005 IRRU's input to EWCO has been coordinated and edited by Jane Parker.

Mark Hall was responsible for drawing up IRRU's successful tender for a major contract to provide information and analysis across three European Foundation monitoring programmes (industrial relations, working conditions and restructuring) for the four years commencing March 2006 and, in conjunction with IRS, to prepare a number of comparative, EU-wide analytical reports on key topics in these fields over the same period.