

[ETUC newsletter]



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Figure of the month

Arcelor Mittal: more than
1,000 JOBS DESTROYED
 in spite of record gains

In May 2011, Arcelor Mittal registered a 67% increase on its profits of May 2010, with a net profit of 1.07 billion dollars. In spite of this increase, on 14 October the group announced the closure of its plants in Liège and the loss of 1,000 jobs.

(Sources: Les Échos and Le Figaro)

Note



Dear Readers,

The news throughout October has been punctuated by a series of European summits designed to stave off a collapse of the eurozone. The ETUC believes that the agreement signed on 26 October is a minimum agreement which it does not consider adequate because it has failed to deliver any lasting solution. If the Greek government calls for a referendum to validate this agreement, we will of course respect its decision. This backs up our view that we need a different policy that can bring about a genuine change of direction and deliver a sustainable response to the millions of workers and citizens who are seeing their standard of living declined. Faced with daily attacks by speculators on the financial markets, we are entitled to wonder whether it is the democratically elected governments or the financial markets that actually hold the reins.

The problems facing millions of citizens and workers every day, namely the wholesale destruction of their jobs and social protection systems, call for urgent, courageous responses, and above all for solidarity. What is happening at the moment in Greece – and other places – clearly shows the limits on the austerity governance to which we are opposed. Europe’s leaders, the Troika, basically think like accountants. Costs have to be tackled, and the first target in their sights is public and social spending. The ETUC will not stand by and let the social aspects be sidelined. We are told that this spending has to be curbed and that this will restore competitiveness. You need only look at Greece to realise that this course of shock treatment that the country has been undergoing for 18 months is not working. This approach must be stopped, in favour of a large-scale programme like the Marshall Plan was, a mutual aid programme within the European Union. Europe faces a challenge: it has to make a qualitative leap towards greater integration.

We believe that solidarity offers the only way out. Workers and citizens are not just virtual beings that can be manipulated at will. They need to be placed at the very heart of political priorities. The systematic dismantling of social cohesion and protection systems, coupled with the attacks on collective agreements, is undermining the future of our society, defying democracy and encouraging political instability and resurgent narrow nationalism. A radical change is needed. The choice of budgetary rigour is liable to set us back several decades.

November starts with the G20 in Cannes, and we hope that Europe will assert itself to the greatest possible extent. The G20 meeting will be preceded by a labour summit in which we shall be participating. It will be our chance to hammer home our priorities and our message: no more synchronised austerity, it is people and the future of our societies that must be at the heart of the priorities, not just the banks and the financial markets. We are expecting some concrete answers. Further, we want to be consulted about those answers.

The Europe that we want is a Europe of solidarity and social progress.

Bernadette Ségol
 General Secretary





[ETUC in action]

ETUC supports Tunisia



29–30/09/11 – Bernadette Ségol visited Tunisia meeting trade unions, employers’ associations, and Government and EU Embassy representatives in support of Tunisia’s ground-breaking moves towards democracy. During the meeting with Abdesselam Jrad, General Secretary of the Tunisian General Trade Union (UGTT), **she underlined the key role of trade unions in the ongoing process of change and reform in the country.** For the European trade union movement, **the developments in Tunisia are of major importance for the democratic transition in the Arab World.** At the end of the visit, the ETUC signed a protocol of cooperation with the Maghreb regional trade union association, the Trade Union Confederation of Arab Magreb Workers (USTMA), which includes support for the solidarity action of USTMA with Libyan workers and new trade unions.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9064>

ETUC meets the Indignants

13/10/11 – Bernadette Ségol met a European delegation of the “Indignant” movement. **Several points of convergence about the concerns on the situation of young people in Europe were noted.** For the General Secretary of the ETUC, *“the society of the future must be able to secure stability for its youth. The crisis has however hit European young people hard with youth unemployment exceeding 40% in Greece and Spain. Precariousness is becoming the rule for many young Europeans. The future of our young people is at stake, and the European Union must address this problem.”*

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9096>

MAJOR MEETINGS

ETUC Executive Committee

19–20/10/11 – The Executive Committee of the ETUC met in Brussels. The [economic and social crisis](#) was the main subject of the discussions. The Executive Committee adopted a declaration **demanding the European leaders for urgent and solidarity solutions regarding the crisis which is hitting European citizens and workers hard.** At the same time, the Committee discussed financial perspectives of the EU, the European social dialogue, sustainable development as well as [climate change](#). Other issues, like working time and the revision of the directive on the European Company were discussed. A [declaration on the 50th anniversary of the European Social charter](#) was adopted.

Declaration on the economic and social situation: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9124>

[Trade Union Agenda]

October – November 2011

03–05/10/2011	Uni-Europa Congress (Toulouse)	More information
19/10/2011	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
19–20/10/2011	ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)	
26/10/2011	Meeting of the Group II ‘Workers’ of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
30/10/2011	LO–Danemark Congress (Aalborg)	More information
17/11/2011	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

EU keeps tolerating financial markets' diktats

26/10/11 – The European Summit has not brought a sustainable way out of the crisis in Europe. Certain measures have been decided upon such as the increase of the European Financial Stability Fund (EFSF) by a “*Special Purpose Vehicle*”. For the ETUC, such a measure is equivalent to creating toxic instruments that governments were meant to combat. **This decision does not represent a strong solution for facing the crisis effectively.** On the contrary, it is proof that **the European Union has once again bowed to the diktat of financial markets.** “*Regular meetings of the Euro Summit will only make sense if they change course and abandon the route of austerity and hardship for the many. Once more Workers are being asked once more to make sacrifices to pay for this dysfunctional system*” said Bernadette Ségol.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9177>

European Summit: the ETUC demands both a stop to the austerity and real solutions for the people

22/10/11 – At the European Summit of 23rd October, the ETUC sent an [urgent message](#) to the European leaders **demanding no more austerity or attacks on social rights.** At the same time, the ETUC drew attention to another round of bank bail-outs at the expense of public budgets already under pressure. “*The European Council must find solutions that first and foremost serve the people and jobs, not the wealthy and the banks. I find it scandalous that banks are again threatening to stop lending to the real economy, in particular to small and medium sized enterprises. Once again, we must ask who governs: democratically elected governments or the financial markets*” said Bernadette Ségol.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9152>

Tripartite Social Summit: EU must get back to jobs and growth



17/10/11 – A European trade union delegation led by Bernadette Ségol and Ignacio Toxo, General Secretary and President of the ETUC, participated in the Tripartite Social Summit. During the meeting, **the European trade union movement voiced their grave anxiety about the evolution of the economic situation and proposed some emergency measures.** For the ETUC, the attitude of Europe’s leaders so far of imposing austerity or sanctions, has made matters worse. On the contrary, **the European Union needs to get back to growth and jobs.** At the meeting, Bernadette Ségol said: “*Europe needs something to look forward to. The answer lies in a combination of reducing deficits and adopting investment measures for employment and for a sustainable recovery. We have long been advocating the idea of a New Deal where the priorities would be a social Europe and a green Europe*”.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9103>



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

Put a stop to punitive action in national policies

06/10/11 - For the ETUC, **interference by the European Union in the policies of countries in difficulty is unacceptable**. The economic agenda included in the confidential letter from the President of the European Central Bank (ECB) to Italy, and the demands made recently by the Troika (EU, ECB and International Monetary Fund) on Greece are proof of that. **The European trade union movement denounces such a punitive approach towards countries which have failed to respect stability rules**. *"It is an illusion to think that these actions will help countries in difficulty to return to growth. Exactly the opposite is happening"*, said Bernadette Ségol.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9074>

Brussels wants to suspend aid to highly indebted regions

06/10/11 - **The European Commission proposed suspending European aid to the poorest regions** and to citizens in difficulty so as to oblige governments to control their public spending. This proposal opens the door to financial sanctions and macroeconomic conditions linked to the Stability Pact. It would penalize regions and areas. **The ETUC opposes this approach which serves only to punish regions and people who are already in difficulty**.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9080>

Environment and sustainable development: ETUC in favor of a Just Transition

10/10/11 - On the occasion of the Environment Council dedicated to the negotiations for the Durban COP17 climate summit and to the preparation of the EU's position in advance of the Rio+20 UN event on sustainable development, **the ETUC reaffirmed its demand in favour of a Just Transition to ensure that social concerns are taken on-board**. According to Judith Kirton-Darling, ETUC Confederal Secretary, *"Ensuring the implementation of Just Transition in international climate policy, as agreed in Cancun, and putting it centrally on the agenda at Rio+20, is fundamental to worker support for European negotiating positions in these international fora"*.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9085>

EU must seriously tackle restructuring and job cuts

26/10/11 - While the workers of Arcelor Mittal from Seraing demonstrate against the management's decision to close the production plants and while the workers of Nokia in Romania have been faced with a similar situation, **the ETUC demands that the European Institutions urgently bring forward proposals to address the increase in industrial restructuring in Europe**. *"We stand together with the workers in Seraing and across Europe, calling for investment in people and innovation through concrete EU industrial policies, and against the siphoning off of profits and deindustrialization"* said Judith Kirton-Darling.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9169>



[EU Agenda]

October – November 2011

03/10/2011	Employment and Social Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information
03/10/2011	Eurogroup meeting (Luxembourg)	More information
04/10/2011	ECOFIN Council (Luxembourg)	More information
10/10/2011	Environment Council (Luxembourg)	More information
10–11/10/2011	External Relations Council (Luxembourg)	More information
11/10/2011	General Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information
12–13/10/2011	Mini-Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)	
17/10/2011	Tripartite Social Summit (Brussels)	More information
17–18/10/2011	European Council (Brussels)	More information
23/10/2011	Conseil européen (Bruxelles)	More information
24–27/10/2011	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
27–28/10/2011	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information
03–04/11/2011	G–20 Meeting (Cannes)	More information
07/11/2011	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	More information
08/11/2011	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	More information
14–17/11/2011	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
14/11/2011	External Relations Council (Brussels)	More information
15/11/2011	General Affairs Council (Brussels)	More information
24/11/2011	Energy Council (Brussels)	More information
28–29/11/2011	Education, youth, culture and sport Council (Brussels)	More information
29/11/2011	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	More information
30/11/2011	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	More information
30/11– 01/12/2011	Mini-Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)	

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