

# [ ETUC newsletter ]



## CONTENTS

- 2 ETUC in action
- 3 Interview with Patrick Itschert, ETUC Deputy General Secretary
- 5 Trade Union Agenda
- 6 Focus on the EU
- 8 EU agenda

## Figure of the month

**700.000**  
JOBS TO BE CUT

The British Government has recently announced a cut of more than 700,000 jobs in the public sector up to 2017.

(Source: Le Figaro)

## Note

**ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!  
TROP C'EST TROP !**



Dear Readers,

'Enough is enough!' That is the message that is being and will continue to be sent out by hundreds of thousands of workers mobilising across Europe. Enough is enough, to say No to cuts in social provisions and to demand the end to austerity measures!

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) supports the actions – strikes, demonstrations and rallies – being conducted all across Europe by its members. All these mobilisations reflect the gravity of the social situation and the need to provide satisfactory responses to it. Unfortunately, in such a context, Europe's governments persist in caving in to the dictates of the financial markets instead of undertaking a real and radical change of course. This gap between the demands of the citizens and the behaviour of their governments is a matter of extreme concern.

So far, we have seen that austerity has not delivered anyway out of the crisis; what is worse, the repeated cuts to public budgets have exacerbated social degradation and unemployment. Our shared future cannot be based on austerity, the dismantling of public services and attacks on trade union rights. On the contrary: the Europe that we want to see is made up of solidarity and social progress, two essential values which must drive any action intended to stimulate sustainable and inclusive growth. Europe has never stood in such dire need of this.

This message has also been sent out to the participants in the Durban climate negotiations. Here again, concrete results are expected by millions of workers around the world. Their expectations cannot be ignored or glossed over in the name of austerity and recession. A strong signal needs to be sent out by the negotiators and be translated into a step change. The needs of the planet and its peoples must take priority over the profit motive.

**Bernadette Ségol,**  
General Secretary



European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC)  
Boulevard du Roi Albert II, 5 | B-1210 Bruxelles (Belgique)  
Téléphone: +32 (0)2 224 04 11 | Fax: +32 (0)2 224 04 54  
E-mail: [media@etuc.org](mailto:media@etuc.org) | [www.etuc.org](http://www.etuc.org)



## [ ETUC in action ]

### Enough is enough! European workers fight against austerity and for a better and fairer future

29/11/2011 - [Several major trade union actions](#), such as strikes, demonstrations and rallies, are taking place across Europe. European workers stand against social regression and demand the end of austerity measures. **The ETUC supports actions organised at national level by its affiliates to fight against austerity and for a fairer and better future.** Bernadette Ségol said: *"Enough is enough! The future of Europe cannot be based on austerity, insecurity and social regression. We support our members in their actions at national level and we urge European leaders to stop bowing to the financial markets' diktats. Europe needs a radical change of course".*

List of actions across Europe: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9315>  
ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9353>

### Working time: European Social Partners launch negotiations

15/11/2011 - The European Social Partners (ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP) sent a [joint letter to Commissioner László Andor](#) informing him that, **further to the Commission consultation on reviewing the working time directive, they will open negotiations.** The aim of the negotiations will be to conclude an agreement, to be implemented by Council decision in accordance with Article 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. **The first negotiation meeting is scheduled for 8 December 2011.**

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9284>

*(At the following page, you will find more information on the working time negotiations in the interview with Patrick Itschert, ETUC Deputy General Secretary)*

### ETUC takes its message to the Progressive Convention

25-26/10/11 - The ETUC has decided to promote a closer dialogue with the main European political parties. In this context, the ETUC played a part in the [Progressive Convention](#) organised by the European Socialist Party in Brussels. Representatives of the European trade union movement **expressed their concerns in the face of the economic and social crisis** that is putting the squeeze on European workers as well as they **proposed solutions.**

ETUC press release:  
<http://www.etuc.org/a/9326>



## [Interview]

### Interview with Patrick Itschert, Deputy General Secretary of ETUC, in charge of the European social dialogue and campaigns.

*A decision was taken at the last ETUC congress (Athens, 16–19 May 2011) to organise a major campaign. What are the objectives of that campaign?*

**Patrick Itschert (PI):** The campaign that we will have to pursue as of May 2012 stems from a double observation made before our last congress in Athens. The ETUC member organisations can be pleased with the mobilising capacity of the Confederation and its members (I am thinking in particular – but not exclusively – of the actions in May 2009, when more than 350,000 workers took to the streets of several capitals), but must also recognise the growing difficulties that the European trade union movement has in making an impact on EU policymakers.

In the past, we managed to affect certain anti-social proposals of the European Commission, such as the Bolkenstein directive, for instance. But today we really have the impression that we are facing a sort of “autism” – and I am weighing my words carefully – on the part of certain European leaders who have only two words to utter: “austerity” and “competitiveness;” even though the ETUC’s analysis, which is shared by several experts, including those from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), shows that “blind” austerity policies (beyond budgetary discipline) are going to lead us straight into recession. Competitiveness, which is broached by the Commission solely from the angle of labour costs, and seen as the only adjustment variable, is in turn leading us into a downward social dumping spiral in order to exit from the crisis from the bottom. Those who govern us surely cannot want to turn Europeans into Chinese.

A response is called for. Faced with this dominant neoliberal right, the congress decided to react by waging a major campaign. The aim is to take joint action by exerting continuous pressure in order to counter this frontal attack on the European social model.



*How will it be implemented?*

**PI:** The campaign will be geared first to our affiliates, from the national confederations to members at company level, to mobilise and engage in a debate on the future of our society in the medium and long term, to reverse these rightist policies. The campaign is to be conducted between May 2012 and May 2014, culminating with the European Parliament elections. It is moreover to have a “common theme”, a common visual identity and slogan, around which two or three subthemes will be tackled, depending on the specific



---

## Interview with Patrick Itschert (following)

---

situations of our affiliates, because it is crucial for everyone to get on board with the campaign. The message is to oppose the “imposed austerity” and its dramatic concrete consequences with our values and our alternatives of “solidarity” and “fairness.” In addition to our defensive and defiant campaigns, we will also go on the offensive and take the initiative to show that other solutions are possible. We want to give people hope again.

To address the urgency of the situation, we have decided to conduct a “mini” campaign on the web to serve as a bridge between now and May 2012. This “mini campaign” will be geared to the theme “enough is enough.” In that campaign, we will spell out in very specific terms, the negative impact of the EU’s current policy. Let there be no mistake: the ETUC is in favour of economic governance, which is a necessary complement to monetary union, but not that dictated to us by the European right. We will therefore denounce austerity and its concrete consequences on the lives of millions of workers, such as for instance the reduction of the civil servant salaries, the deep cuts in public services, the “incentives” to decentralise collective bargaining, the “encouragement” to revise indexing

systems and the assault on trade union rights. Some of these measures actually violate the European Charter of Fundamental Rights and/or the fundamental standards of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). We will come out against such trends by stressing our alternatives. We will underscore yet again that the trade unions are being mobilised in many European countries: on 24 November, a general strike against austerity in Portugal; on 30 November, a day of action for pensions in the United Kingdom and Bulgaria; on 2 December, a major demonstration against austerity in Belgium; and on 13 December, a day of action against austerity in France. All these initiatives of the “ETUC family” are part of a common rationale, and ETUC will be at the side of its members each and every time.

***The period for consulting of the ETUC member organisations about the mandate for the negotiation of the working time directive has just expired. What was the result of this consultation? Will the ETUC negotiate with BusinessEurope?***

**PI:** On 15 November of this year, we sent a joint letter from the European Social Partners, to László Andor, European Commissioner for Social Affairs and Employment, informing him that we would enter negotiations for the revision of the working time directive. Our internal consultation procedure elicited more than fifty responses. This is an altogether positive result. The rate of participation is higher than in the previous 2 consultations, and reflects the interest of our members in this issue. It moreover underscores a growing awareness of the fact that the European social partners must assume their responsibilities on this front, after the failure of five years of negotiations at the level of the European institutions, the Council and the Parliament.

***What are the major aspects on which the negotiations will focus?***

**PI:** Let us be clear: The negotiations which will start on 8 December of this year will be difficult. Our aim is to take the offensive in the discussions. The current crisis is often used as a pretext by some to question our social model, to impose, “in the name of Europe,” measures that they could not (or did not want to) impose at the national level. We note that pressure, stress and occupational diseases are on the rise! One of the starting points for our arguments will consequently be the excellent study by Deloitte – a consulting firm not suspected of any sympathy for the trade union movement – pertaining to a dozen countries, which tried to identify a link between health/safety and working time.





## Interview with Patrick Itschert (following)

This study confirmed that extending the working time increases the risks on health and safety significantly, not only for workers, but also for the people around them. A few weeks ago, the Commission decided to take two Member States to court for violation of the directive and for weekly working times far exceeding the norm. It is clear that a doctor who works 90 to 100 hours a week constitutes more risks for his patient! The Deloitte study on the other hand showed that a more restricted working time boosts productivity: this is an argument that employers should be able to hear. Lastly increasing working time has a negative impact on the reconciliation of working and family life. We will bring all these elements to the fore.

### *Negotiations will start soon on the working programme 2012-2014 of the European Social Dialogue. What are the priorities of the European trade union movement on this front?*

**PI:** A recent study by the European Social Observatory revealed a certain disillusionment and “frustration” among our members regarding a weakening, in terms both of content and implementation, of the latest agreements signed under the European Social Dialogue. Our members were very clear: they preferred to conclude fewer agreements which nonetheless had a real and concrete impact on the workers. To be sure, this criticism should be placed in a political and economic context that is very different from that of the years from 1985-1994 when Jacques Delors was

president of the European Commission. We nonetheless heard this message at our preparatory meeting last September. My idea therefore is to negotiate a more targeted programme.

The priority of priorities will be employment, especially among young people. Unfortunately, the latest Eurostat figures (September 2012) show that youth unemployment now stands at 21.4%, which means more than 5 million unemployed young people in Europe. In some countries, like Spain, this figure is as high as 46% -- which is unacceptable! We cannot tolerate a “sacrificed” generation: we have to take up this challenge. The second aspect on which I would like to work is unquestionably lifelong training and the development of skills. In a globalised context, qualifications must be improved advance more rapidly. The third aspect is the implementation of instruments and in particular the definition of solutions for the difficulties encountered when transposing autonomous agreements. We shall highlight pay inequalities, for example.

Finally, we should think about how to move the European social dialogue forward in the current economic governance context, where part of the social policies is bypassing the social partners and their “independence.” We must ensure that the European social dialogue is developed in such a way that the social partners are better involved in this governance, whereby the macroeconomic dialogue and the tripartite social summit play a primordial role.



# [Trade Union Agenda]

November – December 2011

17/11/2011	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
06/12/2011	General Assembly of the Pan-European Regional Council (Brussels)	
07/12/2011	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
07/12/2011	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
07-08/12/2011	ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)	



## [Focus on the EU and trade union positions]



### Message to G20 Summit: 'Stand Up for Growth, Employment and Workers' Rights'

02/11/11 - Bernadette Ségol, ETUC General Secretary, met President Nicolas Sarkozy, in his role as G20 President in Paris. Bernadette Ségol exposed ETUC's concerns at attacks on trade union rights in European countries as part of the austerity plans. She also demanded that the G20 stand up for growth, employment and workers' rights. On the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> November, she took part in the L20 Summit, which gathered together the trade union leaders of G20 countries. There, she called for an end to "synchronised austerity" in Europe and for mutual support within the European Union with the aim of creating growth and employment.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9192>

### Regulate rating agencies

17/11/11 - As the European trade union movement has been demanding for a long time, **the European Commission has just launched a new initiative concerning the regulation of rating agencies.** According to the ETUC, this regulation is necessary to confront the rating agencies' abuses, but the proposal must go even further. In line with the declaration adopted by the [Europeans for Financial Reform \(EFFR\) coalition](#), of which the ETUC is a member, the European trade union movement demands a redefinition of the rating agencies' role, the end of conflict of interest, the fight against market abuses as well as more transparency in their actions.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9292>

### Do not touch the food aid programme for the most deprived!

06/11/11 - The ETUC welcomed the decision of the European Council of Ministers for Agriculture to extend the European Food Aid Program for the Most Deprived (MDP) until 2014. However, the **ETUC expressed grave concern** about the German agriculture minister's demand to **abandon this programme from 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014**, in return for the current extension. The European trade union movement calls for the programme to be maintained and **to be included in the European Social Fund.**

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9293>



## [ Focus on the EU and trade union positions ]

### COP17 negotiations in Durban: European workers need concrete, ambitious and fair solutions

28/11/11 - On the occasion of the launch of international climate negotiations (COP17) in Durban, the ETUC called for concerted action by negotiators to achieve concrete, fair and ambitious results. For the ETUC, concern about the threat of economic depression both in Europe and globally is dominating choices on long-term policymaking and blocking movement in the climate negotiations. "We are convinced that to stimulate sustainable growth in Europe, increased ambition beyond a business as usual scenario is necessary. Workers in Europe are fighting for a Sustainable New Deal for Europe combining the needs of people and planet before profit", said Judith Kirton-Darling, ETUC Confederal Secretary.

ETUC press release : <http://www.etuc.org/a/9335>

### Europe needs new action for growth, now!

23/11/11 - The ETUC took note of the recent EU Commission's proposals on economic governance. In particular, the ETUC welcomed the fact that the Commission is now opening the way for consultation and discussion on the common issuance of Stability Bonds, but it calls upon the European Central Bank (ECB) to act now to stop the madness of financial speculation. Without such an intervention, the European economic and social system will continue to be pushed to the brink of collapse by financial market speculation.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9322>

### OECD Economic Outlook: Give workers confidence

28/11/11 - The [latest Economic Outlook published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) paints a stark picture of collapsing growth, with the Euro-zone and UK economies moving into recession. The ETUC, the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) demanded that the OECD member countries give workers confidence and jobs. For Bernadette Ségol, "the OECD's warning of further contagion in the Euro-zone shows that European countries must now agree that debt must be mutualised in Europe and the European Central Bank must expand its role to under-write the Euro".

Joint TUAC-ETUC-ITUC press release : <http://www.etuc.org/a/9340>

### Georgia must respect trade union rights

06/10/11 - The ETUC sent a [letter](#) to Karel De Gucht, EU Commissioner for Trade, and Catherine Ashton, EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security calling for an investigation to be initiated with a view to withdrawing trade preferences to Georgia as long as that country continues to violate trade union rights.

For the ETUC, concrete progress on labour rights in Georgia is now essential for any further development of this country's relations with the European Union.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9288>



## [EU Agenda] November – December 2011

03-04/11/2011	G-20 Meeting (Cannes)	<a href="#">More information</a>
07/11/2011	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
08/11/2011	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
14-17/11/2011	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
14/11/2011	External Relations Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
15/11/2011	General Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
24/11/2011	Energy Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
28-29/11/2011	Education, youth, culture and sport Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
29/11/2011	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
30/11/2011	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
30/11-01/12/2011	Mini-Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)	
01/12/2011	External Relations Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
01-02/12/2011	Employment and Social Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
05/12/2011	General Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
05-06/12/2011	Competitiveness Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
07-08/12/2011	Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
08-09/12/2011	European Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
12-15/12/2011	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
13-14/12/2011	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>
19/12/2011	Environment Council (Brussels)	<a href="#">More information</a>

**Editorial team:** MANAGING EDITOR: **Bernadette Ségol** • EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: **Patricia Grillo** • EDITOR: **Daniele Melli**

**Please pass this newsletter on to your colleagues and contacts**