

[ETUC newsletter]



Contents

- 2 ETUC in action
- 3 Trade Union Agenda
- 4 EU Agenda
- 5 Focus on the EU and trade union positions

Figures of the month

45 %
of young people
are unemployed

In Spain, the number of unemployed people has recently passed the symbolic threshold of 5 million. (Source: Le Figaro)

1,226
billionaires -
4,600 billion
dollars

The American Forbes magazine reported that there are 1226 billionaires in the world in 2012, which is 16 more than last year. Overall, the billionaires have wealth worth in excess of 4600 billion dollars, with an average of 3.7 billion each. (Source: Le Figaro)



Dear Readers,

Hands off my right to strike!

In its recent proposal regarding the 'Monti II' regulation, the European Commission opted for an approach that weakened the right to strike. This text had been eagerly awaited by the trade unions, because it was supposed to correct the problems created by the Laval and Viking cases. Yet, contrary to the commitments made by President Barroso to combat social dumping, the proposed text threatens to damage workers' rights and social Europe even further. What is under fire now, is the right to conduct collective action. Economic freedoms and the rules of competition must not be allowed to ride roughshod over fundamental rights. We demand that collective action is not hampered by European law. Now, it is up to the Parliament and the Council to correct this.

This debate reveals a trend which is unfavourable to social Europe. As we have witnessed throughout these crisis years, the temptation to sacrifice our social model on the altar of competitiveness is strong. In practice, it translates into austerity measures, repeated attacks on social rights and against the welfare state, as well as deregulation and sanctions. One need only look at the economic and social situation in certain countries to understand that this approach is not working, and is causing untold social damage. In spite of this virtually unanimous observation, Europe's leaders are relentlessly pursuing this agenda.

Europe must take a different path, developing alternatives to austerity. You cannot govern by relying solely on budgetary orthodoxy, as is the case at present. The European trade union is calling for a European social contract which would give priority to quality employment, in particular for young people. A country that fails to invest in its youth is jeopardising its own future. The trend towards austerity urgently needs to be reversed, in favour of a plan for economic recovery and sustainable growth with clear objectives, such as investments in an ambitious industrial policy for Europe. This is the message that we sent out at the recent meetings with Chancellor Angela Merkel as well as with the Danish Prime Minister and current president of the European Union's Council, Helle Thorning-Schmidt.

Support from labour interests for the European project can only be ensured by choosing the path of a fairer Europe where growth goes hand in hand with social cohesion and solidarity. The European trade unions will continue to mobilise, in order to achieve this objective.

Bernadette Ségol,
General Secretary



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[ETUC in action]

Social partners present their **working programme 2012-2014**

29/03/12 – At a press conference in Brussels, the **European Social Partners – ETUC, BUSINESSEUROPE, UEAPME and CEEP – presented their joint working programme 2012-2014. Priority has been given to youth employment.** Other themes, such as an analysis of the European labour markets, skills, mobility, gender equality and migration were also mentioned.

Working programme:
<http://www.etuc.org/a/9772>



ETUC's support for the general strike in Spain

29/03/12 – The ETUC expressed **its support for the general strike organised in Spain.** This general strike has been organised by its Spanish members to protest against labour market reforms. The ETUC stands, and will continue to stand, beside its Spanish members in their struggle for workers' rights, negotiation, dialogue and democracy, and against the dismantling of social cohesion.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9842>

MAJOR MEETINGS

ETUC Executive Committee

06-07/03/12 – The Executive Committee of the ETUC met in Brussels. The crisis was the main subject of discussions. [An urgent declaration on the situation in Greece was adopted.](#) The Committee also discussed and adopted a resolution on the Annual Growth Survey 2012, on collective bargaining, on anticipating change and restructuring as well as on the future of European Company Law. Some news should be noted on ETUC membership. The Executive Committee gave the green light to demand for membership by the **Polish Trade Union Forum (Forum Związków Zawodowych) which became the 85th member of the ETUC.** Indeed, three trade unions obtained observer status: the Confederation of Free Trade Unions (KSS) of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Union of Free Trade Unions of Montenegro (UFTUM) and the Confederation of Trade Unions of Montenegro (CTUM).

Declaration on Greece: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9771>

Conference “Towards Rio+20: A Sustainable New Deal for Europe”

12-13/03/12 – As a run-up to the United Nations' Rio+20 conference dedicated to sustainable development, the ETUC, in cooperation with the European Trade Union Institute (ETUI) organized the conference “**Towards Rio+20: A Sustainable New Deal for Europe**” in Jørlunde, Denmark. The aim of the conference was to promote an alternative agenda for sustainable development, based on sustainable growth, decent work and social justice.

Agenda of the conference: http://www.etuc.org/IMG/pdf/Rio_20_Agenda_3_-2.pdf



[ETUC in action]

Deep concerns about trade union freedoms

08/03/12 - The ETUC [has written to Baroness Catherine Ashton](#), EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, to express its **deep concerns at recent developments on trade union freedoms in Egypt**. The ETUC demanded EU to intervene urgently with the military government of Egypt to annul the 26 February sentence against Kamal Abbas, general coordinator of the Centre for Trade Union and Worker Services (CTUWS), who was unfairly sentenced, in absentia, to six months imprisonment for "insulting a public officer". *"This sentence is an attack on freedom of expression but also on Egypt's independent workers' movement"* said Bernadette Ségol.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9778>

OTHER CAMPAIGNS

Water must be considered a Human Right

18/03/12 - At the World Water Forum, the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU) announced the [launch of a European Citizen's Initiative](#) to lodge with the European Commission aimed at **implementing water as a Human Right**. By this citizen's initiative, EPSU urges European policy makers **to keep water out of internal market rules and not treat it as a commodity**. The ETUC supports this campaign.



[Trade Union Agenda] March - April 2012

05/03/2012	Executive Committee of the Pan-European Regional Council (PERC) (Brussels)	
06/03/2012	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
06-07/03/2012	ETUC Executive Committee (Brussels)	More information
24/03/2012	CGSLB Congress (Brussels)	
28/03/2012	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
29/03/2012	Joint press conference ETUC-BUSINESSEUROPE-UEAPME-CEEP 'Presentation of the New European Social Partners' Work Programme 2012-2014 (Brussels)	More information
19/04/2012	ETUC Steering Committee (Brussels)	
25/04/2012	Meeting of the Group II 'Workers' of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	



[EU Agenda]

March – April 2012

01/03/2012	Tripartite Social Summit (Brussels)	More information
01-02/03/2012	European Council (Brussels)	More information
08-09/03/2012	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Brussels)	More information
09/03/2012	Environment Council (Brussels)	More information
10/03/2012	Informal meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs (Copenhagen)	More information
12/03/2012	Eurogroup meeting (Brussels)	
12-15/03/2012	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
13/03/2012	ECOFIN Council (Brussels)	More information
16/03/2012	Foreign Affairs Council (Trade) (Brussels)	More information
22-23/03/2012	Transport, Telecommunications and Energy Council (Brussels)	More information
23/03/2012	Foreign Affairs Council (Brussels)	More information
26/03/2012	General Affairs Council (Brussels)	More information
28-29/03/2012	Mini-Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Brussels)	
28-29/03/2012	Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
30-31/03/2012	Informal meeting of Ministers for Economic and Financial Affairs (Copenhagen)	More information
17-20/04/2012	Plenary Session of the European Parliament (Strasbourg)	
18-20/04/2012	Informal meeting of Ministers for Energy and Environment (Horsens)	More information
23/04/2012	General Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information
23-25/04/2012	Informal meeting of Ministers for Employment, Social Policy and Health (Horsens)	More information
24/04/2012	General Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information
25-26/03/2012	Plenary Session of the European Economic and Social Committee (Brussels)	
26-27/04/2012	Justice and Home Affairs Council (Luxembourg)	More information



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

Tripartite Social Summit: for an investment policy to create decent jobs

01/03/12 – On the day after the European Day of Action, the ETUC took part in the Tripartite Social Summit on employment and growth. The European trade union delegation called directly on EU leaders to **change course at once**. The ETUC called for a **European stimulus plan to develop a sustainable economy and to create quality jobs**. For the European trade union, **the social partners must be involved in any policy geared to the labour market** and it is consequently vital for their independence to be respected.

ETUC press release:
<http://www.etuc.org/a/9747>



SOURCE : COUNCIL OF THE EU

ETUC's opposition to the adoption of the permanent austerity treaty

02/03/12 – At the margins of the Spring European Council, Heads of State and Governments signed the “Treaty on stability, coordination and governance in the economic and monetary union”. **The ETUC stressed that it opposes the new treaty as this will impose even greater budgetary austerity in Europe and hamper the recovery of employment**. The European trade union deplored the fact that **growth and employment were not the focus of detailed commitment** in the same way as budgetary rigour.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9762>

No to undermining the right to strike

21/03/12 – The ETUC **rejected the proposal for a “Monti II” regulation** adopted by the European Commission. For the European trade union, **the text unfortunately falls short of correcting the problems brought about by the Viking and Laval cases**. *“The right to take collective action is a fundamental right which must be guaranteed”*, said Bernadette Ségol. Indeed, the ETUC considers that **measures to improve the implementation of the Posting of Workers Directive are not sufficient to fight social dumping**, an objective that European Commission President José Manuel Barroso [himself committed to take](#).

ETUC press release:
<http://www.etuc.org/a/9823>



[Focus on the EU and trade union positions]

International women's day: equality cannot be just an empty word

08/03/12 – Bernadette Ségol addressed the “International Women’s Day 2012 – Women and Austerity: Impact and Resistance” event organised by the Trades Union Congress (TUC) in London. The General Secretary of the ETUC **confirmed the European trade unions’ commitment to promoting gender equality and fighting inequalities**. For the European trade union movement, equality cannot be just an empty word.

Speech of Bernadette Ségol: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9781>

Meeting with Chancellor Angela Merkel



23/03/12 – A delegation of European trade union leaders, including Bernadette Ségol, met with Chancellor Angela Merkel to discuss the economic and social situation and the future of Europe. During the meeting, the European trade unions insisted on **the need to reverse the austerity policy and replace it with a stimulus and investment plan for jobs and sustainable growth**.

ETUC press release: <http://www.etuc.org/a/9830>

Bernadette Ségol met Helle Thorning- Schmidt, President- in-Office of the Council of the EU

13/03/12 – Bernadette Ségol met the Danish Prime Minister, and current President-in-Office of the Council of the European Union, Helle Thorning-Schmidt. The discussions focused essentially on the current economic situation. Bernadette Ségol encouraged the Danish presidency to **give another direction to Europe**, so that the European project remains credible in the eyes of its citizens. For the ETUC, **the way out of the crisis is through sustainable growth, not austerity**.

ETUC press release:
<http://www.etuc.org/a/9813>

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